

Section 7.0 Fiscal Resources

The success of any viable strategy for reducing losses from wildfire depends in major part upon the efforts of individual property owners to (1) create and maintain adequate defensible space on their property; and (2) increase defensibility of structures and other improvements; and (3) adequately prepare for evacuation if needed. Financial responsibility for these actions has historically rested almost entirely on individual property owners.

Resources for community defensible space, roadside clearing and major fuel break projects have historically come from a variety of sources. The existing community defensible space network around the Painted Cave community, for example, was created over many years by a combination of volunteer labor, public and private grant funding obtained by the Wildland Residents Association and Painted Cave Volunteer Fire Department, voluntary contributions by individual property owners, and SBC Fire and Forest Service fuel treatment projects. Community defensible space around the Trout Club has also been completed by a combination of community volunteer efforts and SBC Fire and Forest Service fuel treatment projects. Annual roadside weed abatement along Highway 154 has been conducted by the State of California through CalTrans. Roadside fuel modification and maintenance along other roadways in the CWPP area has been funded and carried out almost entirely by SBC Fire, although some work has been conducted by the Painted Cave Volunteer Fire Department. Fuel treatment projects on Forest Service land are funded and carried out by the federal government, although recent legislation has opened the door for more cooperative projects involving joint federal, state and local collaboration.

7.1 Fuels Management Projects

SBC Fire is the primary agency conducting roadside fuel management in the CWPP and elsewhere in the County. SBC Fire also conducts various fuel management projects around the County based on priorities determined by SBC Fire. Hands-on work for fuel management projects is performed by the SBC Wildland fire crew. Aside from state and federal grant funding (discussed below), SBC Fire is dependent upon property-based tax assessments, state SRA funds, general fund allocations approved by the SBC Board of Supervisors, and reimbursements of firefighting or other emergency response costs incurred in major incidents. SBC Fire has fire protection and prevention responsibilities at a countywide level, which can make directing funds to the specific priorities of this CWPP problematic. Due to budgetary and staffing constraints, oftentimes, a staggered approach to the implementation of fuel hazard treatment activities identified in this Plan are more attainable when SBC Fire, LPF, and private property owners can seek external sources (i.e., grants, stewardships) to fund projects associated with this CWPP.

The following grant opportunities may be available to support this CWPP through the following agencies and group: CAL FIRE, Fire Safe Council, and FEMA.

State of California, California Climate Investments (CCI) Fire Prevention Grants

CAL FIRE administers the California Climate Investments (CCI) Fire Prevention Grants Program. This program supersedes the previous SRA Fire Prevention Fund grant program. This program is the most likely source of funding for major non-federal fuel management projects in the CWPP. CCI grants may be awarded for hazardous fuel reduction projects, fire prevention education and fire prevention planning. Applications may be filed by local government agencies, special districts, Fire Safe Councils and non-profit organizations involved in fire safety. The annual grant cycle typically begins with applications in

the fall of each year culminating in final awards the following year. Grant information from CAL FIRE is available at www.fire.ca.gov/grants/grants.

California Fire Safe Council Clearinghouse

The California Fire Safe Council administers a Grants Clearinghouse that channels federal grant funds to local fire prevention projects. Applicants may include local government agencies, Fire Safe Councils, **non-profit corporations and homeowners' associations**. **Grants may be awarded for fuel management** projects, fire planning or fire education programs, or combinations of these activities. Proposed projects must be consistent with an approved local CWPP. Recent Clearinghouse grants have required the applicant to secure matching funds equal to one-half the cost of the project being funded.

Grant opportunities are available at www.cafiresafecouncil.org/grants-clearinghouse.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grants

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides grant funding to local government agencies willing to implement structure or home wildfire mitigation assistance activities. The Santa Barbara County OEM is the conduit for potential grant funding through the *Santa Barbara County Hazard Mitigation Plan*. FEMA offers a variety of disaster assistance programs through grants with different eligibility requirements. Grant Programs include Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and Pre-Disaster Mitigation.

- *Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)*
The HMGP provides funding for long-term hazard mitigation measures following major disaster declarations. Funding is available to implement projects in accordance with State, territorial, federally recognized tribes, and local priorities.
- *Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM)*
The PDM program provides funds on an annual basis for hazard mitigation planning and the implementation of mitigation projects. FEMA provides funding for measures to reduce or eliminate overall risk from natural hazards.

Additional information is available at www.fema.gov/hazard-mitigation-grant-program.

Private Grants

Some local foundations may provide funding for fuel management projects, equipment or other fire safety projects. The Painted Cave Volunteer Fire Department has been successful in obtaining substantial foundation funding for fuel management work as well as for firefighting equipment in the past. It is unknown whether such funding will continue to be available and whether other organizations such as the WRA or Fire Safe Council could successfully obtain private grant funding in the future.

Community Self-Assessments

Some funding for fuel management and ongoing maintenance could potentially be derived from community level assessments collected by local homeowners associations, mutual water companies or volunteer fire departments. As an example, for a number of years in the 1990s, the Painted Cave Mutual Water Company collected a \$ 5.00/month assessment from each household served to support the Painted Cave Volunteer Fire Department. The assessment was nominally voluntary, but was in fact paid by almost all households. Community level assessments would be particularly useful for funding ongoing

maintenance of community defensible space, since securing funding for maintenance activities has historically been a major problem. However, the ability of local associations to levy and spend such assessments, on either a voluntary or mandatory basis, may depend upon the by-laws and articles of incorporation of the organization and governing statutes, as well as the willingness of residents to support the assessment.

7.2 Structure Hardening

Generally structure hardening has been the responsibility of individual homeowners. With one known exception, state and federal funds have not been available to assist homeowners of any income category with structure hardening. The major known exception was a re-roofing program in the Big Bear area of California funded with FEMA PDM funds.

In the wake of the disastrous 2017 and 2018 fire seasons in California and elsewhere, it is likely that additional funding will become available for private home hardening, if local governments are willing to commit staffing and resources to the create the necessary programs. California Senate Bill 465, discussed below, is an example of the type of measures which may make financial assistance for structure hardening more available, as the state and federal governments reassess the need for such programs. At the present time, however, the measures discussed below remain the only established potential sources for assistance for structure hardening measures. In both cases, creation of the necessary programs would require considerable effort by the County of Santa Barbara as well as collaboration by local residents and allied **non-profit organizations, homeowners' associations or other interest groups.**

FEMA Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grants (PDM)

FEMA's Pre-Disaster Mitigation (PDM) Grant Program may provide grants for structure hardening as well as hazardous fuel reduction around residences. The grant must also be for projects that are consistent **with the local government's federally approved Hazard Mitigation Plan. SBC's current Hazard Mitigation Plan** satisfies this requirement for structure hardening projects. PDM grant applications must be made by the State, or a local government applying as a sub-applicant through the State. However, counties may submit an application to fund specific projects proposed by homeowners or non-profit associations. PDM grants are highly competitive; applications are judged based on multiple factors, including cost-effectiveness. Development of a viable grant proposal would require detailed planning for identifying homes eligible for assistance, monitoring work performed with grant funds, and administering the grant. Additional information on PDM grants may be found at <https://www.fema.gov/pre-disaster-mitigation-grant-program>.

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Program

In 2018 the State Legislature passed SB 465, which amends provisions of the pre-existing Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) statutory program to allow PACE funds to be used for structure hardening improvements for private homes, as well as for energy efficiency or seismic safety improvements. To establish a local PACE program covering structure hardening measures, the local government (in this case, the County of Santa Barbara) must pass a resolution designating the areas within an existing Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone that will be included in the program; specify the types of structure

hardening improvements which may be financed, and allocate funding for the program (Cal. Streets & Highways Code section 5899.4). Qualifying homeowners may then apply to the program for funds to complete structure hardening improvements. The funds are repaid by annual additions to the **homeowner's property tax bill. This program, if implemented, would provide many homeowners with** what is effectively a low-cost loan to complete major one-time structure hardening improvements that they might not otherwise be able to finance.

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