

2026



# Community Wildfire Protection Plan

San Diego County



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# Preface

## What is a community wildfire protection plan?

Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP) are *blueprints* for preparedness at the neighborhood level. They organize a community's efforts to protect itself against wildfire, and empower citizens to move in a cohesive, common direction.

Among the key goals of the San Diego County CWPP, which was developed collaboratively by citizens, and federal, state and local management agencies, are to:

- Align with the local fire agency's cohesive pre-fire strategy, which includes educating homeowners and building understanding of wildland fire, ensuring defensible space clearing and structure hardening, safeguarding communities through fuels treatment, and protecting evacuation corridors.
- *Identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatment.*
- Recommend the types and methods of treatment that will protect the community.
- Recommend measures to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.



**Note:** The CWPP is not to be construed as indicative of project “activity” as defined under the “Community Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, Chapter Three, Projects Subject to CEQA.” Any actual project activities undertaken that meet this definition of project activity and are undertaken by the CWPP participants or agencies listed shall meet with local, state, and federal environmental compliance requirements.

*The Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County produced this report in partnership with the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County which is comprised of a 15-member board of directors consisting of leading representatives from federal, state, and local agencies and stakeholders throughout San Diego County. In accordance with federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.*

# 01

## Snapshot of the Community

*Each community in San Diego County has a unique history and identity. Below is a description of what sets this area apart, including its landscape, preparedness, and firefighting resources.*

### I. OVERVIEW

#### San Diego County

San Diego County covers roughly 4,500 square miles, spanning coastal cities, inland valleys, mountains, and desert regions. The county is home to a broad range of vegetation communities including coastal sage scrub, chaparral, oak woodland, montane conifer, grasslands, sparse desert scrub, and more. Wildfires in the county are driven by fuel patterns, extended drought, and seasonal wind events (notably strong offshore dry winds that can drive rapid fire spread in inland and foothill areas). This plan is regional in nature, covering the entirety of San Diego County. This regional CWPP incorporates and complements local CWPPs and wildfire preparedness plans developed by individual communities and jurisdictions.

San Diego County faces a variety of challenges that increase wildfire risk. This includes urban and suburban development adjacent to natural vegetation in the Wildland-Urban Interface, evacuation vulnerabilities, drought, climate change, and introduced invasive pests. San Diego County's [Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation](#)

[Plan](#) identifies hazards most significant to San Diego, with wildfire and climate change both being extremely probable and with a high overall significance. Although our region faces many challenges and risks, strong collaboration is present between fire agencies, community-based organizations, Firewise Communities and Fire Safe Councils, local utilities, and other partners, working together on locally led solutions. These collaborations allow for regional cohesion when facing wildfire challenges.

San Diego County is one of North America's most biologically diverse regions, shaped by its Mediterranean climate, varied topography, and wide range of habitats including coastal, chaparral, forest, riparian, and desert ecosystems. This biodiversity supports numerous threatened, endangered, and endemic species while also contributing to wildfire resilience. Diverse native ecosystems can influence fuel patterns, landscape heterogeneity, and fire behavior, supporting ecological health and long-term resilience.

*Population: **Roughly 3.3 Million***

## II. LANDSCAPE

### Topography

San Diego County exhibits a broad topographic range from sea level to alpine elevations above 6,000 feet in the Laguna and Cuyamaca ranges. Vegetation types are strongly influenced by elevation and moisture gradients:

- Coastal and lowland: coastal sage scrub, mixed chaparral, grasslands.
- Coastal canyons: riparian wetlands, upland coastal sage scrub and chaparral.
- Foothills and slopes: mixed chaparral.
- Higher elevations: oak woodlands and mixed conifer stands.
- Desert east: sparse scrub and grassland with lower contiguous canopy.

The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) in San Diego County is not a single landscape type but a mosaic of distinct community contexts, each with different risk profiles. CAL FIRE classifies the majority of the county's inland, foothill, and canyon-rim communities within High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ), including communities such as Ramona, Alpine, Potrero, Lakeside, Julian, Descanso, and Pine Valley, which face elevated exposure due to chaparral fuel loads, steep terrain, and limited ingress and egress.

Within the City of San Diego, a unique urban-embedded WUI exists across the canyon system, including canyons in communities like Tierrasanta, Kensington, and Scripps Ranch, where residential neighborhoods directly abut open space with limited setbacks and high ember transport potential. These areas present a structure-to-

structure spread risk distinct from the rural WUI, requiring targeted ember-resistant construction and canyon edge defensible space strategies alongside traditional fuel management.

Across all WUI contexts, risk is shaped by the intersection of vegetation type, complex topography, and seasonal offshore wind events. WUI risk is further compounded by structure density, limited evacuation routes, and vulnerability to ember ignition. Mitigation requires integrated application of defensible space (PRC 4291), ignition-resistant construction (CBC Chapter 7A), strategic vegetation management, and coordinated evacuation planning.

### Fire History

For thousands of years, the Kumeyaay used beneficial fire as an intentional land management practice to maintain ecosystem health and balance. These carefully timed, low-intensity fires reduced hazardous fuel accumulation, promoted biodiversity, encouraged the growth of culturally significant plants such as oak trees and native food resources, improved habitat conditions for wildlife, and helped protect communities from catastrophic wildfire. Frequent cultural burning created resilient landscape patterns across grasslands, coastal sage scrub, chaparral margins, and oak woodlands, resulting in healthier ecosystems that were better adapted to fire.

In modern times, San Diego County has experienced numerous large fires, many with rapid spread under offshore wind and drought conditions. Historical perimeters show a concentration of large fires in the inland and foothill chaparral zones; coastal urban fires have historically been driven by ember exposure and structure-to-structure spread.

Notable fires include the 1970 Laguna Fire, 2003 Cedar Fire, 2007 Witch Creek, Guejito, and Harris Fires, and the 2014 Cocos, Poinsettia, and Bernardo Fires.

See Appendix B, Figure 3, for San Diego County’s Fire History or visit the interactive [Fire History Map here](#).

### Key Infrastructure

San Diego County has many valuable assets that could be threatened by wildfire:

- **Transportation Infrastructure:** Essential for evacuation and first responder access, major highways, roads, bridges, and public transit facilities are found in San Diego County.
- **Airports & Airfields:** Serving as hubs for emergency response, travel, and more, San Diego County has an International Airport and regional airports such as Montgomery Gibbs and Brown Field, which provide bases for firefighting aircraft and emergency operations.
- **Water Supply & Dams:** Water infrastructure is critical not just for residents, but also for firefighting needs and for the long-term resilience of San Diego County.
- **Utilities & Services:** Utilities provide the backbone for residential safety and emergency operations. San Diego Gas and Electric infrastructure includes transmission lines, substations, and distribution networks. Critical facilities include fire and police stations, emergency operations centers, and hospitals. Public Safety Power Shutoffs are conducted to protect the public on high fire risk days.

- **Watersheds:** San Diego County has 11 westward draining watersheds which include unique, sensitive habitat.
- **Recreational opportunities:** San Diego County has many City, County, State, and Regional parks which offer opportunities for the public to enjoy nature and are home to many unique and special status species and natural resources.
- **Military Bases:** There are 6 major military installations officially operating in the San Diego metropolitan area, alongside more than a dozen smaller specialized support facilities and reserve centers across the county.
- **Agriculture:** San Diego County is home to the largest number of small farms as well as the largest number of organic producers out of any county in the United States. Agriculture is vital to our region’s economy, environmental sustainability, and culture.

### Maps

Using technology and local expertise, the sponsors of this CWPP have included a series of maps depicting the site and situation of San Diego County (Appendix B). The following maps are visual aids for agencies, stakeholders, and community members to assess and make recommendations.

1. Area Communities Map
2. Fire Hazard Severity map
3. Fire History
4. Evacuation Map



An interactive map was created by CWPP partners to assist community members and agencies with interacting with the CWPP.

The map is available here and through the QR Code:  
<https://tinyurl.com/sd-cwpp>

### III. FIREFIGHTING RESOURCES

Major fire protection entities operating in San Diego County include (but are not limited to):

- CAL FIRE / San Diego County Fire Protection District (countywide services and planning for CSA areas and County Fire operations).
- Local fire departments and districts (e.g., City of San Diego Fire-Rescue, Escondido, Chula Vista, Oceanside, Carlsbad, Bonita-Sunnyside, North County, etc).
- United States Forest Service Cleveland National Forest
- United States Wildland Fire Service (formally Bureau of Land Management)
- California Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Equipment includes, but is not limited to engines, water tenders, Type I/III engines, dozers, hand crews, aerial resources (fixed wing and helicopter support coordinated through state/federal aviation pools).
- Air operations facilities and contracted aerial firefighting resources are utilized throughout peak fire season.



# 02

## Collaboration

*Strong working relationships are critical in ensuring that our communities are well-prepared. This section describes those key partners and their roles in developing this CWPP.*

### **I. KEY PARTNERS**

The Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County in partnership with the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County led the development of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), with guidance and support from several partners. The development team includes representatives from the agencies described in the table below.

ORGANIZATION	ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES
Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County in partnership with the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County	Lead regional CWPP coordination, drafting, stakeholder outreach, and integration of community priorities into countywide wildfire resilience strategies. Facilitate collaboration between local communities, agencies, and partner organizations while supporting long-term capacity building.
Local Fire Safe Councils	Represent community-level wildfire concerns and priorities, support local CWPP integration, and serve as trusted connectors between residents and regional partners.
CAL FIRE / San Diego County Fire Protection District	Provide countywide fire prevention leadership, assist with development of CWPP and decision making, community risk assessment, development of community protection priorities, and establishment of fuels treatment project areas and methods. Lead Unit Fire Plan implementation and coordinate wildfire

	mitigation strategies in the State Responsibility Areas.
San Diego City Fire Rescue	Provide input and expertise on City of San Diego lands, fire, vegetation, and fire safe concepts, including risk and value assessment. Participation in CWPP Review Committee and integration of City of San Diego CWPPs into the regional plan.
US Forest Service	Input and expertise on federal lands, fire, and vegetation management. Participation in CWPP Review Committee.
Bureau of Land Management and United States Wildland Fire Service	Providing technical input and expertise on federal lands, fire, and vegetation management. Participation in CWPP Review Committee.
California Department of Fish & Wildlife	Providing technical input and expertise on state lands, fire, and vegetation management. Participation in CWPP Review Committee.
San Diego Canyonlands	Provided input and expertise on wildfire and habitat resilience initiatives, community education, and Fire Safe Council support.
Community members	A CWPP survey was circulated during the drafting process to capture community-level feedback and priorities to inform the plan. 46 survey responses were captured with defensible space being the highest priority for the respondents.



# 03

## Community Engagement & Education

*Understanding wildfire risk is a key building block in preventing the loss of property and life. This section discusses efforts to build awareness, starting with the individual.*

### I. PRIORITIES

- Increase opportunities for capacity building and education for local Fire Safe Councils and Firewise Communities.
- Increase participation and understanding of real-time evacuation and alert tools.
- Conduct consistent messaging on wildfire risk, defensible space, home hardening, and evacuation preparedness.
- Prioritize outreach to socially vulnerable communities, including seniors, low-income households, non-English speaking residents, students, and DAC communities.

### II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- As a part of the CWPP update, staff created and circulated a feedback survey to collect community-level priorities to inform the plan. 46 survey responses were captured with the top priority being defensible space and the need to understand what is required and receive assistance with implementation.
- Home Assessment Program – Offer educational home ignition zone

assessments to help communities understand wildfire resilience principles and gain resources to address their goals.

- Fire Safe Council Workshops – Partner with community Fire Safe Councils to conduct various workshops including the “Last Chance Survival Simulation Workshop”, “Wildland-Urban Interface Workshop”, “Open-Source Intelligence Workshop”, American Red Cross Disaster Readiness presentations, and others dependent on FSC goals and priorities.
- Wildfire Safety Fairs – Various organizations host engaging fairs where residents can meet organizations working on wildfire resilience and gain resources and information. San Diego Gas and Electric hosts annual fairs in high-risk communities across the County.
- CAL FIRE “Ready, Set, Go!” Campaign – Ongoing educational outreach across the County, carried out by SDCFPD and local FSCs.

### III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Expand Firewise and Fire Safe Council participation – Support local communities without recognition to form a local chapter.
- Increase collaboration and integration of local CERT teams and Fire Safe Councils. This would include cross training FSC volunteers to become CERT members and encouraging CERT members to join their local FSCs.
- Capacity Building for Community Fire Safe Councils – Offer training on topics that FSCs would like to learn more about to help community volunteers grow, such as conducting wildfire home assessments, nonprofit licensing, administration, fire behavior, etc.
- Digital education tools – Update the FSCSDC website with interactive home hardening and defensible space tools.
- Community Ambassador Program – Train local Fire Safe Councils as wildfire preparedness educators able to give non-regulatory home assessments and understand regional wildfire resilience goals and objectives.
- Annual Wildfire Safety Month – Coordinate public events every spring with partner agencies (CAL FIRE, SDCFPD, SDG&E, RCDGSDC, FSC, San Diego City Fire Rescue, and local FSCs).
- Promote awareness and enrollment in Alert San Diego, Genasys Protect, PulsePoint, and other real-time evacuation and alert tools through workshops, FSC meetings, and outreach campaigns.
- Integrate wildfire education into school safety programs and conduct outreach to local school districts.



# 04

## Structural Hardening

*Long before a wildfire sparks, there are numerous steps that residents can take to protect their homes and other structures. This section describes some of those efforts.*

### I. PRIORITIES

- Encourage replacement of vulnerable materials such as wood shake roofs, open eaves, vents, and single-pane windows with WUI compliant alternatives.
- Support full compliance of Chapter 7A of the California Building Code for new construction buildings and full compliance of California Department of Insurance “Safer from Wildfire” framework for all homes.
- Develop rebate, grant, or cost-share programs to support at-risk homeowners in making improvements.
- Coordinate with insurers to link hardening measures to reduced premiums and eligibility for coverage.
- Collaborate with HOAs to align their covenants, conditions, and restrictions with home hardening recommendations.

### II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Sunrise Powerlink Wildfire Mitigation Grant Program – Over the years, SPLMGP has awarded homeowners in their service area grants to upgrade to WUI compliant vents.

- [California Wildfire Mitigation Program Home Hardening Initiative](#) – An OES and CAL FIRE program that focuses on developing community home hardening programs to retrofit, harden, and create defensible space for homes at high risk to wildfire. This program targets high social vulnerability communities and provides financial assistance to qualifying low- and moderate-income households. Three San Diego communities have been identified to pilot the HHP, Dulzura, Campo, and Potrero.
- Local Fire Safe Councils have completed various projects to support residents with hardening their homes. For example, Alvarado Estates FSC offers a vent cost-share program, San Elijo Hills FSC offers a fence replacement cost-share program, among many others offering locally-led home hardening programs.
- Home hardening and ember ignition workshops in partnership with CAL FIRE, US Wildland Fire Service, and local fire agencies for community FSCs.

### III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Develop an interactive home hardening guide on the FSCSDC website.
- Develop a vetted list of local contractors trained in wildfire retrofits to streamline homeowners and FSC access.
- Launch a retrofit incentive program for vulnerable homes in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) to assist residents with upgrading vents, attached fencing, eaves, and creating Zone 0. Collaborate with local fire agencies, Fire Safe Councils, HOAs, and other stakeholders to reach the most vulnerable populations.
- Coordinate with home insurance companies/other public insurance models to develop robust insurance opportunities for homeowners.

# 05

## Defensible Space

*Creating a buffer between buildings and the grass, trees, shrubs, and surrounding wildland areas is essential to improving survivability. This section looks at efforts to build this key layer of protection.*

### I. PRIORITIES

- Advocate for residents to comply with Public Resources Code 4291 and local ordinances requiring defensible space around structures. Each local fire agency having jurisdiction (LFAHJ) may have specific guidelines around defensible space, recommended plants, and more. Community members are encouraged to receive best practices for creating defensible space from their LFAHJ.
- Promote defensible space zones for home ignition zone management:
  - Zone 0: Maintain a noncombustible area around the home (exclude attached fences, mulch, in-ground plants, furniture, and other combustible materials).
  - Zone 1: Create and maintain proper horizontal and vertical spacing standards between vegetation to interrupt continuity.
  - Zone 2: Thin and separate larger vegetation to slow approaching fire and reduce radiant heat.
- Expand defensible space assistance for seniors, disabled individuals, and low-income residents who cannot perform clearing work independently.
- Focus resources in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones and DAC communities.

### II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Defensible Space Assistance Program: Operated by the RCDGSDC and FSCSDC, this program assists residents who are facing barriers to creating defensible space. Assistance is targeted at communities within VHFHSZs, and priority is given to residents who have received notices to abate by their local fire agency.
- Defensible Space Inspections – CAL FIRE, San Diego County Fire, and local fire agencies throughout the County conduct Defensible Space Inspections to notify property owners of their current compliance with fire code. Continued

collaboration between the FSCSDC, CAL FIRE, SDCFPD, and other local fire agencies, to connect property owners to resources available to assist with compliance is critical.

- Community Chipping Programs – Offer opportunities for communities to participate in Chipping Days. This can take place through the FSCSDC’s curbside chipping program, San Diego County Fire’s Community Chipping Events, community Fire Safe Council events, and others.
  - Notable projects include the Regional Resilience Grant Program, a collaborative project between San Diego County Fire, San Diego City Fire Rescue, and the Fire Safe Council of San Diego County, where the organizations worked together to coordinate chipping events in their various jurisdictions to offer opportunities for community members to dispose of hazardous vegetation collected when creating defensible space.
  - Curbside Chipping Program: The RCDGSDC and FSCSDC have offered a curbside chipping service for many years, assisting residents in at-risk communities create defensible space. Curbside chipping in WUI communities and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) continues to be a priority.

- Fire Safe Councils across the County offer events such as “Dumpathons” where community members can dispose of debris when clearing defensible space. These events clear tons of material each year and are a priority for many communities.

### III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Encourage Fire Safe Councils, Firewise Communities, and other groups to complete CAL FIRE’s Qualified Entities Program and other local programs to educate communities on how to conduct home assessments.
- Support FSCs with creating volunteer-led fuels reduction crews to help in-need residents in their communities create defensible space. As a part of this project, ensure FSCs understand how to create habitat sensitive, fire code compliant management strategies.
- Activate CBOs, non-profits, and community groups to support best practice defensible space on public lands, i.e. Canyonlands partners with the City of San Diego to increase defensible space capacity on City-owned public lands.
- Development of a locally led fire adapted plant guide, in alignment with local fire agency jurisdiction and CAL FIRE guidelines.

# 06

## Fuels Treatment

*Fuels are combustible materials such as grasses, leaves, plants, shrubs and trees that feed flames. This section describes efforts to treat and manage these materials in the community.*

### I. PRIORITIES

Vegetation management priorities in San Diego County are guided by risk-based planning, community input, vegetation type analysis, and interagency coordination. Key priorities include:

- Develop and implement hazardous fuels treatment projects that cross ownership and jurisdictional boundaries using tools such as *Good Neighbor Authority* and cooperative agreements to achieve landscape-scale risk reduction.
- Utilize advanced planning tools, including the Vibrant Planet platform, to identify and prioritize treatment areas based on structure exposure, fire behavior modeling, vegetation type analysis, and community risk profiles, to account for projects that increase ecological value and reduce fire risk.
- Focus treatments in Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) communities, particularly those located within VHFHSZs, prioritizing the protection of at-risk communities and assets.
- Prioritize fuels reduction along primary, alternate, and contingency evacuation routes to improve egress reliability and reduce roadside ignition and entrapment hazards.
- Prioritize ignition reduction programs that reduce human-caused wildfire starts in high-risk areas.
- Prioritize strategic ecosystem management programs on a scale that provide multi-benefit or win-win outcomes.
- Reduce hazardous fuels near utilities, communication sites, water infrastructure, and other essential facilities to support continuity of operations during wildfire events.
- Manage hazardous vegetation surrounding designated Temporary Refuge Areas to improve survivability should evacuation not be immediately possible.
- Align treatment priorities across jurisdictional boundaries to maximize landscape scale effectiveness.
- Identify productive uses for cleared biomass and build capacity for its utilization in the county.

- Prioritize regional coordination around high-risk invasive species approaches.
- Maintain and restore biodiversity through ecosystem-based management, invasive species control, and strategic vegetation treatments to enhance landscape wildfire resilience. These approaches support ecological health while also contributing to more effective, long-term wildfire risk reduction in San Diego County.
- Measure project success based on value-added rather than simply “acres treated”.

## II. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- “Saving San Diego’s last Mixed Conifer Forest” - The Resource Conservation District of Greater San Diego County received a CAL FIRE Forest Health grant to work across jurisdictional boundaries to conduct hazardous fuels reduction and restore forest health. This project coordinated several landowners, from private and state entities, and



- emphasized ecological and community resilience.
- CAL FIRE / San Diego County Fire Roadside Treatment Program: Implementation of a 20-foot roadside clearance program along county-maintained roads to reduce ignition risk, improve evacuation safety, and enhance firefighter access (see interactive map for project specifics).
- State and Federal Agency Fuels Programs: CAL FIRE, the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish & Wildlife, and other partners conduct fuels treatments and prescribed fire projects on public lands throughout the county, subject to weather and environmental conditions.
  - Annual Treatment accomplishments vary widely, with yearly totals varying based on weather, staffing, and environmental compliance requirements.
  - Federal partners maintain annual fuels treatment targets that vary year-to-year depending on funding, staffing, and burn windows.
  - These ongoing efforts collectively reduce hazardous fuel loads, disrupt fuel continuity, and support safer wildfire suppression operations.
- CAL FIRE Community Projects:
  - Crest Community Fuel Break: This 159.83-acre community fuel break is aimed at protecting the community of Crest, establishing defensible space to slow wildfire spread, and improve firefighter safety. Led by CAL FIRE, crews manage nonnative vegetation to establish a fuel break approximately 200 feet in width.

- Guatay Community Fuel Break: This 71.53-acre wildfire mitigation project slows wildfire spread, improves firefighter access, and increases operational safety during suppression efforts. It is led by CAL FIRE San Diego, establishing a strategic fuel break designed to protect the 800 residents of Guatay and nearby communities of Pine Valley and Descanso.
- Warner Springs Estates Fuel Break: Located in northeastern San Diego County, this wildfire mitigation project is designed to protect the community of Warner Springs, and nearby ranches, tribal lands, and critical access routes. Led by CAL FIRE, this project covers 16.52 acres and provides enhanced protection for roughly 3,000 residents.
- San Diego Canyonlands Mid-city Canyons Palm Removal and Restoration:



Implementation of invasive species removal, including high fire risk Mexican fan palms, pampas grass, and Arundo donax within the riparian corridors of urban-embedded canyons. The project includes helicopter removal of large invasive palms and trees, followed by ecological uplift of riparian and upland habitats for whole canyon system wildfire resilience.

- San Diego Canyonlands and Del Mar Mesa FSC: Community-led, preventative treatment of emergent invasive fuels including pampas grass and flashy annuals, to mutually address community wildfire resilience while minimizing encroachment of invasive species into areas of high biological sensitivity.

### III. FUTURE PROJECTS

Future fuels treatment efforts will build on existing programs while expanding the scale, coordination, and effectiveness of treatments across San Diego County.

- County Fire/CAL FIRE to utilize targeted grazing as a fuel treatment method in partnership with County Parks and other



suitable open spaces to manage fine fuels and reduce fire spread potential.

- Increase the use of prescribed fire where feasible to reduce accumulated fuels, restore fire-adapted ecosystems, and improve long-term landscape resilience, subject to air quality, weather, and regulatory constraints. When prescribed fire is utilized in ecologically appropriate contexts, it is both a risk reduction and restoration tool.
- Continue integrating fire modeling, structure exposure analysis, and local knowledge into fuels planning to ensure treatments are strategically placed and cost-effective.
- Support FSCs in identifying priority fuels projects within their communities and coordinating with agencies to advance implementation.
- Support the development of hand crews to conduct brush management in city-owned or county-owned properties that are within 100 feet of structures.
- Support regional coordination and programmatic approaches to high-risk invasive species removal i.e. palm/eucalyptus removal from canyons, early response to emergent invasive species populations.
- Develop and support workforce development programming to build equitable pipelines for individuals to enter the environmental and wildfire resilience sectors.

# 07

## Evacuation Planning

*Identifying key corridors in and out of a community – as well as temporary refuge areas – is essential to being prepared for evacuation. This section provides an overview of the PACE system (primary, alternate, contingency and emergency) used to plan ahead.*

Evacuation planning is a dynamic process subject to the nuances of each community. Below is an overview of San **Diego County**'s key ingress and egress, as well as designated evacuation corridors, Temporary Refuge Areas, completed projects, priorities and future projects.

### I. OVERVIEW OF INGRESS AND EGRESS

San Diego County's transportation network includes a mix of major highways, arterial roads, rural roads, and narrow mountain corridors. Many communities, particularly those in the WUI, have limited access points, steep terrain, and roads bordered by open space.

Main thoroughfares in San Diego County include the major freeways, Interstates 5, 15, 805, and 8, as well as the following state routes: 52, 54, 56, 67, 79, 94, 125, 163, and 905. Caltrans helps to maintain safe roadways by conducting regular weed abatement along these well-traveled routes.

Residents are encouraged to:

- Know at least two ways out of their neighborhood and two ways out of their broader community.
- Identify evacuation routes in advance and avoid reliance on a single roadway. Many FSCs have identified their own PACE plans

which communities are encouraged to familiarize themselves with.

- Understand that evacuation routes may change based on fire location, wind direction, and real-time conditions.

See Appendix B, Figure 4, which identifies major roadways, evacuation corridors, and Temporary Refuge Areas.

An interactive map is available here of all FSCs and their PACE plans: <https://tinyurl.com/sd-cwpp>

### II. DESIGNATED EVACUATION CORRIDORS

Specific routes vary by community and are identified through coordination with local fire agencies, law enforcement, Caltrans, County Department of Public Works, and Fire Safe Councils.

Final evacuation instructions are always communicated by emergency officials and should be followed regardless of pre-planning. Major arteries in San Diego County are listed below.

## San Diego County PACE

It is encouraged for each community to create their own unique PACE Evacuation plan, local plans and orders will supersede the county-level PACE.

**PRIMARY** Major interstates include I5, 15, 8, 805, and state routes 94, 79, and 78

**ALTERNATE** State routes including 78, 76, 56, 54, 163, and 75

**CONTINGENCY** See your local PACE plan

**EMERGENCY** See your local PACE plan

*Always stay informed and follow directions from authorities. Conditions can quickly change, it is critical to stay flexible.*

### III. TEMPORARY REFUGE AREAS

Temporary Refuge Areas (TRAs) are locations intended to provide a last-resort option if evacuation is not immediately possible. TRAs are not evacuation destinations and should only be used when directed or when evacuation routes are unavailable. Many community FSCs have identified TRAs within their CWPPs.

### IV. PRIORITIES

- Improve route reliability by coordinating fuels treatment and roadside vegetation management along evacuation corridors, including partnerships with Caltrans and the County Department of Public Works.
- Ensure cross jurisdictional alignment by conducting evacuation planning with federal, state, and local partners.
- Increase public awareness of evacuation routes and information sharing by promoting the use of AlertSanDiego, Genasys Protect, and other official

notification platforms to ensure residents receive timely evacuation information.

- Support community level planning by working with Fire Safe Councils and Firewise Communities to identify PACE routes while reinforcing that real-time evacuation orders supersede pre-identified plans.
- Increase equity and access by prioritizing outreach to socially vulnerable populations, including seniors, people with disabilities, non-English speakers, and households without access to private transportation.

### V. COMPLETED & ONGOING PROJECTS

- Expanded coordination with transportation and public works agencies to align evacuation routes with fuels treatment priorities.
- Increased integration of evacuation planning into community wildfire education and Fire Safe Council programming.
- Improved identification, mapping, and public awareness of Temporary Refuge Areas.
- Enhanced planning for assisted evacuation needs, including transportation support and evacuation assistance programs.
- Continued evaluation and improvement of evacuation corridor resilience through modeling, after-action reviews, and community feedback.

## VI. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Temporary Refuge Area Identification and Improvement: Continue to identify, evaluate, and enhance TRAs for use during wildfire events when evacuation is not immediately possible. Future efforts will include completing a formal evaluation of candidate sites, developing TRA site standards, and conducting public education to clarify that TRAs are last resort options and not substitutes for early evacuation. Significant coordination with city jurisdictions, fire agencies, federal partners, and community organizations is necessary.
- Evacuation Route Improvements: A primary focus of future projects will be improving the reliability and safety of designated evacuation corridors with a focus on communities in designated VHFSZs and one way in, one way out communities. Future efforts may include vegetation clearance, strategic removal of hazards such as dead trees and overhanging limbs, and coordination with Caltrans, CAL FIRE, and local partners.
- Alerting and Public Notification Enhancements: Outreach focusing on enrollment in AlertSanDiego and Genasys and multilingual communication materials to increase timely and accessible communication during a disaster.

# 08

## Other Mitigation & Preparedness

*There are countless ways that communities can act to protect themselves ahead of wildfires. This section details additional past, current and future efforts underway that were not previously mentioned.*

### I. PRIORITIES

- Educate community members about the tools available to increase insurance coverage and reduce costs including IBHS Wildfire Prepared Home designation and NFPA Firewise.
- Expand Firewise participation, particularly in High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones to increase community education and preparedness.
- Support a regional framework to support long-term natural resource management efforts, specifically resource maintenance.

### II. COMPLETED AND/OR ONGOING PROJECTS

- San Diego County is established as a [“Fire Risk Reduction Community”](#). Mandated by PRC 4290.1, this list of local agencies located in a state responsibility area or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ) designates communities that meet best practices for local fire

planning. This list was developed and is maintained by the Board of Forestry. San Diego County was designated as a FRR Community in 2024.

- Additional communities within San Diego County are also designated including Chula Vista Fire Department, City of Chula Vista, and Alpine Fire Protection District.
- San Diego County “Ag Pass” is an identification program that allows vetted commercial farmers and ranchers to access their properties during emergency evacuations, including wildfires. The program was created to address the 2018 wildfires and officially approved in 2022 to prevent loss of livestock and agriculture infrastructure.
- Knox Box programs provide eligible residents with a free, secure, wall-mounted lock box installed by fire officials near their front door. It holds a spare house key, allowing first

responders quick access during medical emergencies and disasters. Knox Box programs are currently offered by San Diego Fire-Rescue and San Diego County Fire Protection District.

- American Red Cross Home Fire Campaign
  - The American Red Cross supports risk reduction in San Diego County through its Home Fire Campaign, providing free smoke alarm installations and fire safety education. Any resident qualifies for assistance, and the program prioritizes vulnerable populations, including seniors, low-income households, and residents in high fire hazard areas. Additionally, notification devices are provided for those who are deaf and hard of hearing.

### III. FUTURE PROJECTS

- Encourage additional communities in high and very high wildfire severity zones to become designated Fire Risk Reduction Communities.
- Coordinate with partners across the County from local Fire Safe Councils, fire districts, and Firewise Communities to offer educational home assessments in their jurisdictions.
- Educate farmers and ranchers about the Ag Pass program through workshops, printed materials, and presentations with Resource Conservation Districts, NRCS, USDA, San Diego County, and other partners.
- Expand the Knox Box program in additional communities.
- Support local Indigenous communities by increasing access to and use of beneficial fire on their own terms.

# 09

## Signatures

*This plan must be approved by the following key parties: the local author (examples include Fire Safe Council President, Firewise Community, Tribal National, HOA, etc.), the chief of the primary responding fire agency, the CAL FIRE Unit Chief, and chair of the CWPP review committee. This section includes these signoffs.*

*The Community Wildfire Protection Plan, as developed for **San Diego County**:*

- Was collaboratively developed and meets the intent of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) in emphasizing the need for agencies to work collaboratively with communities in developing hazardous fuel reduction projects, and places priority on treatment areas identified by communities themselves in a CWPP. Interested parties and federal land management agencies in the vicinity of this CWPP have been consulted.
- Identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment that will protect areas within this CWPP.
- Recommends measures to reduce ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.
- Is intended for use as a planning and assessment tool only, utilizing a compilation of community issues/goals and projected fire mitigation strategies. The CWPP is not to be construed as indicative of project “activity” as defined under the “Community Guide to the California Environmental Quality Act, Chapter Three, Projects Subject to CEQA.” Per the Community Guide, Section 3.1.1, “CEQA only applies to public agency decisions to approve, or actions to carry out, a discretionary project.” Any actual project activities meeting this definition of project activity and undertaken by the CWPP participants or agencies listed shall meet with local, state, and federal environmental compliance requirements.
- Assists and encourages compliance with current county and state fire code standards.

DocuSigned by:  

 X Ann Baldrige  
95693C427E8A44E

Ann Baldrige  
 Executive Director, RCD of Greater SD County

### Community Wildfire Prevention Plans Review Committee:

This CWPP was reviewed and recommended for approval by the San Diego Community Wildfire Protection Plan Review Committee as demonstrated by the signature below.

Signed by:  
  
85EBD0B2A3D6400...  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Donald Butz  
President, FSC of San Diego County

The CAL FIRE Unit Chief has final signing authority on CWPPs in San Diego County. The signature below attests that the standards listed in the section above and the content of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan are proposed to be met and mutually accepted.

DocuSigned by:  
  
60A84422F325430...  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Tony Mecham  
Unit Chief, CAL FIRE SDU

# 10

## Appendices

*This section includes important additional information that complements other portions of the plan.*

### APPENDIX A. MEETING TRACKING DOCUMENTS

This CWPP was developed for San Diego County, through a series of community meetings. The Fire Safe Council of San Diego County members who contributed to the document include the following:

#### Community Representatives

- The San Diego County CWPP was reviewed, and feedback was provided by San Diego County’s network of community Fire Safe Councils.
- The document was distributed to over 300+ community FSC representatives, agency representatives, community members, and community-based organizations. 46 responses were captured via a feedback survey and other responses from partners and agencies were captured in the comments section of the live Google Document.
- The survey responses showed Defensible Space was the highest priority by a wide margin, with the demand for enforcement clarity and assistance with implementation. Some residents still feel underinformed, showing the need for

increased communication and outreach to the community.

- Senator Brian Jones distributed the draft plan and feedback survey in early April 2026.

#### Agency Representatives

- Ryan Silva, CAL FIRE / San Diego County Fire (SDCFPD)
- Jessica Martinez, San Diego County
- Don Solleder, CAL FIRE / SDCFPD
- Michael Cornette, CAL FIRE / SDCFPD
- Morgan Dioli, FSCSDC/RCDGSDC Staff
- Eric Just, CAL FIRE
- Brice Smith, CAL FIRE
- Rex Hambly, United States Wildland Fire Service
- Scott Grasmick, US Forest Service
- Jim Mitchell, US Fish & Wildlife
- Donald Butz, FSCSDC President
- Heather Cady, FSCSDC/RCDGSDC Staff
- Alex Kane, San Diego City Fire Rescue
- Sierra Brown, San Diego City Fire Rescue
- Helen Sylvia, San Diego City Fire Rescue
- Julia Richards, San Diego River Conservancy
- Mike Rottenberg, San Diego Gas & Electric
- Melissa Altman, American Red Cross
- Jeshua Taucher, San Diego Canyonlands

- Cody Gallagher, Office of Emergency Services
- Luca Carmignani, San Diego State University/Fire Science Consortium

### Meetings Dates

- 11/13/25 – FSCSDC Executive Board Meeting announcing a CWPP workplan
- 12/17/25 – Initial San Diego County CWPP Drafting Session
- 1/8/26 - FSCSDC Executive Board & General Meetings: The Executive Committee reviewed draft maps and outreach plan, during the General Meeting the draft CWPP was circulated for feedback to the community FSC/partner network
- 1/15/26 - FSCSDC and CAL FIRE met to discuss the CWPP maps and work with GIS staff to disseminate feedback from the executive committee and explore the opportunity to develop an interactive version of the standard CWPP maps.
- 3/12/26 - FSCSDC Executive Board & General Meetings: The Executive Committee reviewed the revised maps and provided further direction, during the General Meeting an additional reminder to review the draft plan and provide feedback was provided.
- 3/25/26 - An additional feedback reminder was solicited to the FSCSDC stakeholder network.
- 4/3/26 - Senator Brian Jones distributed the community feedback survey to his constituents.
- 4/15/26 - San Diego County CWPP Review Committee Meeting
- 5/14/26 - FSCSDC Executive Board Meeting plan ratification

**APPENDIX B.  
MAPS**

**Figure 1 Area Communities Map**

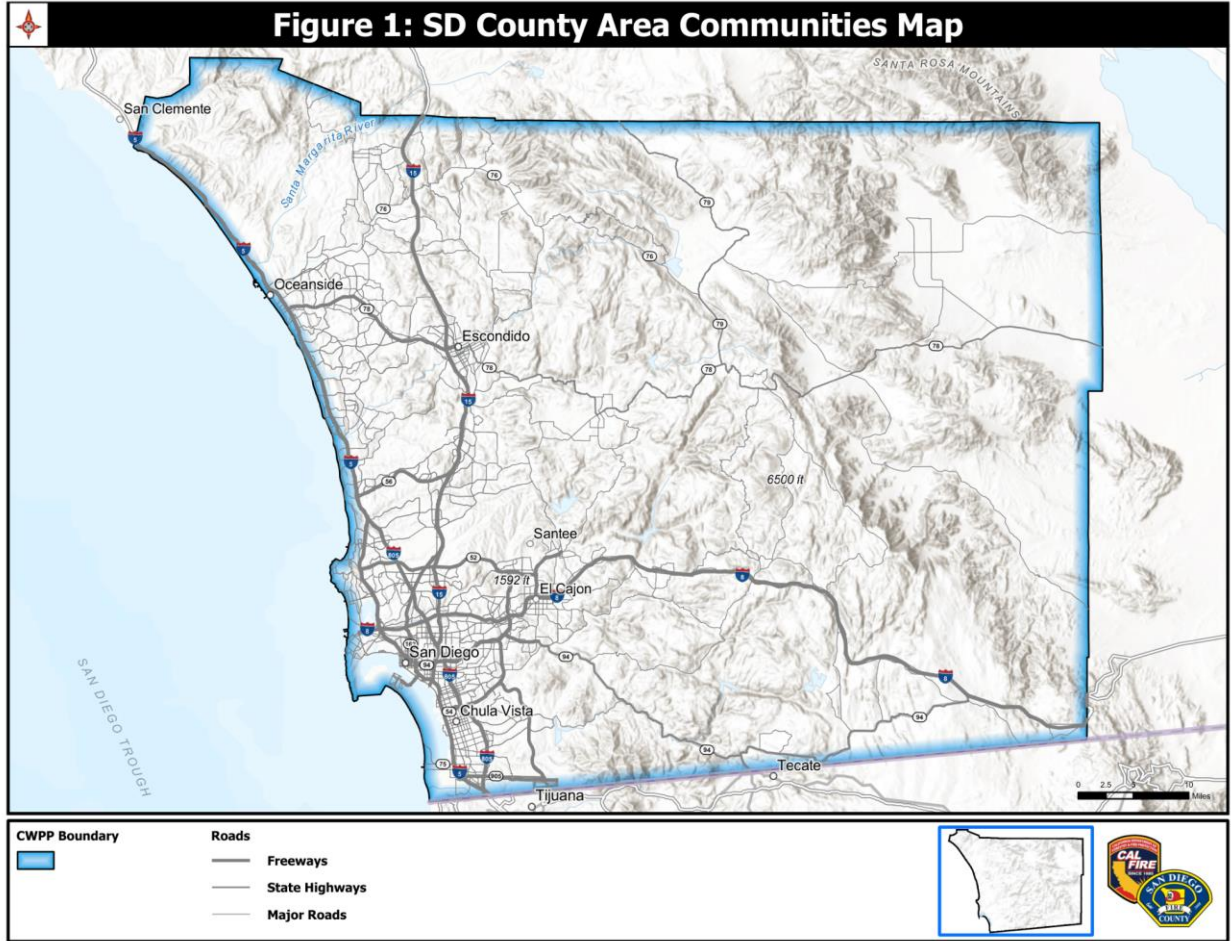


Figure 2 Fire Hazard Severity Map

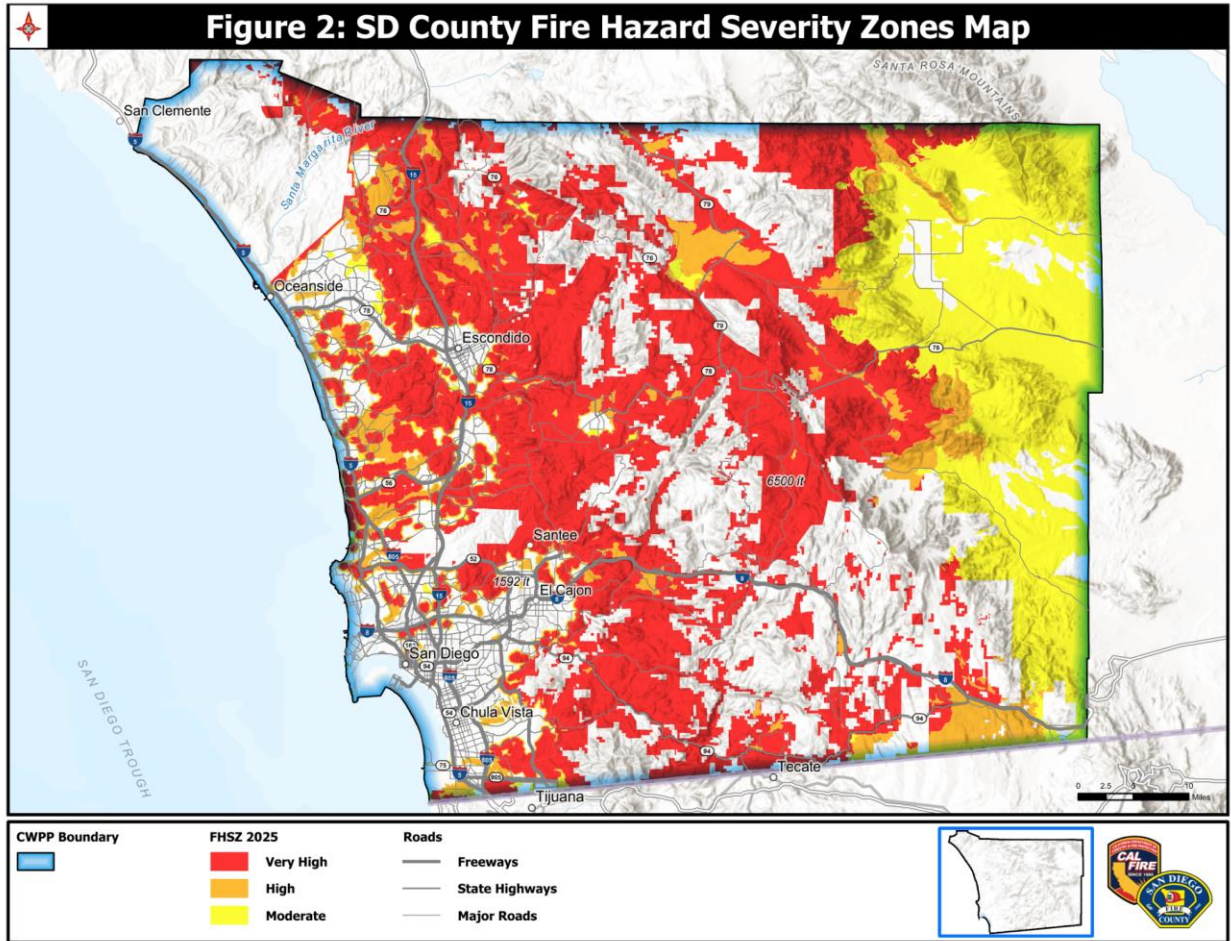


Figure 3 Fire History 1910-Present

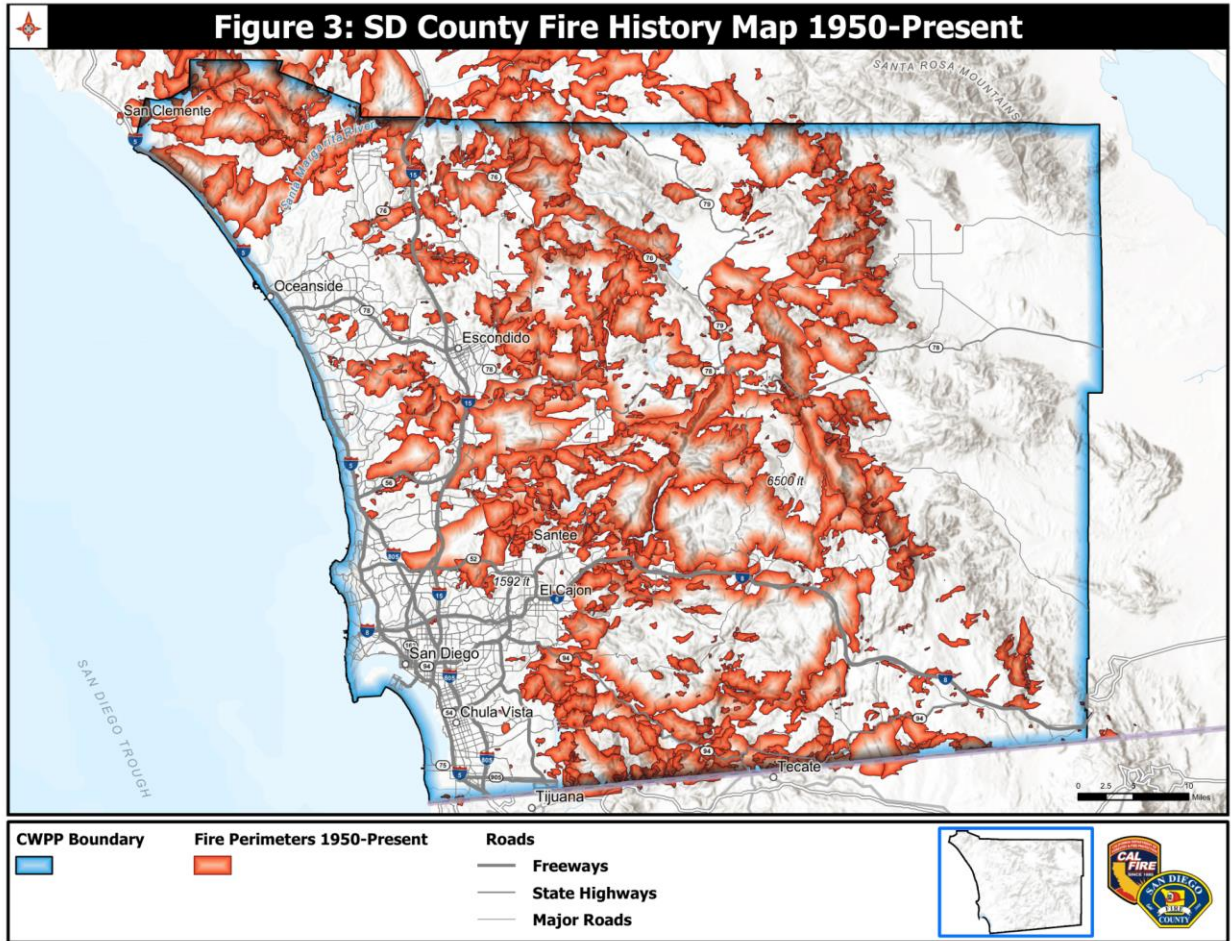


Figure 4 Evacuation Map

