

Funding for Defensible Space Program

In February 2010 the Diablo Fire Safe Council (DFSC) Board of Directors approved the agreement funding the 2009-2010 Defensible Space Program. The \$150,000 in funding is provided by a National Fire Plan grant from the USDA Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council. The program has three components: defensible space workshops, a tool lending library and defensible space fuel reduction projects.

Matching funds are provided by in kind services from Board members, Contra Costa Fire Department, El Cerrito Fire Department, Oakland Fire Department and a host of others (see Community Partners and Participants).

The program will continue through September 2011.



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10 Community Projects

There have been neighborhood wildfire prevention projects funded in nearby areas!

Is there a project in your back yard you would like help to achieve?

Lake Drive neighbors are working together behind their homes to prevent wildfires. McBryde Avenue residents are starting a chipping program for their street. Camp Herms Boy Scouts have teamed with the Civicorps crews to make their property safer for campers and their neighbors. How about you? Do you and your neighbors need assistance to get a fuel reduction project done?

The Diablo Fire Safe Council (DFSC) is sponsoring defensible space fuel reduction projects for 2010 – 2011 funded courtesy of a National Fire Plan grant from the USDA Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council. Cost-share assistance of up to \$5,000 per project is available to groups or individuals to reduce fuel loads and create defensible space on their property, in their neighbor's yards and on community lands.

You don't have to provide matching funds – you and your neighbors' work efforts and organizational skills count as matches.

Projects can include:

- Chipping or green waste removal of homeowner cut material,
- Mowing or "weed whacking"
- Tree thinning (cutting of small trees) or "limbing-up"
- Brush cutting
- Grazing

Emphasis is on high wildfire hazard areas in Contra Costa County where neighbors, homeowners associations, civic organizations and other groups are organized and available to promote fire safe efforts.

See Diablo Fire Safe Council web site:

www.diablofiresafe.org for more information on selection criteria and an application. Updates will be provided on the progress of community projects.

Or contact:

Cheryl Miller Executive Coordinator DFSC

Email: DFSCMiller@comcast.net

Phone: (510) 536-0143



Supervisor Gioia Sponsors Series of Defensible Space Workshops

It takes the entire community to create neighborhood defensible space.

On March 13, 2010, Contra Costa County Supervisor Gioia kicked off a series of four fire safety community meetings held in March, April and May in the communities of East Richmond, El Cerrito, El Sobrante and the Tewksbury neighborhood.

The workshops were aimed at residents to spread the word about wildfire safety.

"As an East Bay Hills resident living near the wildland/urban interface, it is important to create a line of defense around your home from an approaching wildfire or structural fire. Come and learn best practices on how to protect your home through vegetation management, plant spacing, weed abatement and creating fuelbreaks and use of new roofing materials."



Annual Contractor Workshop

These crews are now trained and ready thanks to the DFSC contractor workshop.

Thursday March 18, 2010 was the kind of spring day you brag about to Eastern relatives. A high of 76°. Blue skies. A gentle breeze. While the rest of the nation dealt with winter, twenty-five Californian men and women gathered at the annual DFSC defensible space training; their thoughts turned towards summer and preparing for wildland fire. The group included certified arborists, professional landscape designers and horticultural consultants. There were work crews specializing in debris removal. Others had talents in managing commercial landscapes, open space lands and residential gardens.

At 7:30 AM the men and women met in the Hillside Center in scenic Rossmore, Walnut Creek, California to begin what they thought would be a standard contractor training program. While the emphasis was on what we as humans can do, this group of twenty five was reminded of the power of nature's wrath.

First DFSC Members, Assistant Fire Marshal Leroy Griffin, Oakland Fire Department and then Battalion Chief Michael Bond, El Cerrito Fire Department provided images to vividly explain the anatomy of a fire and the actions that could change the outcome when a wildland fire burns into a neighborhood.

Next Maria Morales of Safe Solutions, Martinez California showed pictures worthy of the best do-it-yourself home improvement show.

To wrap up, Carol Rice from Wildland Resource Management Inc., Walnut Creek, California further explained about Best Management Practices that not only make safer homes, but also protect endangered plants and animal species. Participants then gathering in groups to test what they had learned with photographs of potential projects. Once they had prepared their treatment prescriptions they were shown "after" photographs and the whole team discussed the results.

After a quick lunch, the participants hit the road. . .

Destination?

Acalanes Adult School.

On a steep slope, 10 elite members of the group showed off their professional skills. Chainsaws whined. Branches flew. Chippers roared. Three hours and a lot of sweat later, defensible space emerged.

... their thoughts turned towards summer and preparing for wildland fire.

If a fire should be started accidentally in the parking lot from a car's hot tail pipe, the homes of the senior citizens located upslope have a better chance of being winners.





Looking Forward to 2011

Alameda County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a collaboratively developed plan that identifies wildland fire hazards, prioritizes way to reduce those hazards and recommends measures for homeowners and communities to reduce ignitability of structures.

The Diablo Fire Safe Council (DFSC) has obtained funding to develop such a plan for Alameda County. We plan to spend 2011 and part of 2012 working with community members and agency partners.

In 2009, DFSC and stakeholders in Contra Costa County developed a Community Wildfire Protection Plan addressing high fire hazard areas to reduce the risk of loss of life and property due to wildfire.

There are two key reasons to develop a CWPP:

1. The plan is the opportunity to influence where and how federal agencies implement fuel reduction project on federal lands.
2. The plan establishes priority for funding of hazardous fuel reduction projects.

Since the development of the Contra Costa County plan DFSC has been able to secure funding for community projects (see 10 Community Projects P. 1.)

The CWPP must be agreed to by three entities: the local government, the local Fire Department, and the State Forester. Three additional minimum requirements are:

1. Collaboration: Local and state government agencies in consultation with federal agencies and other parties
2. Prioritized fuel reduction: Identify and prioritize areas for hazardous fuel reduction, recommend type of treatment; must protect one or more at risk communities and essential infrastructure
3. Treatment of structural ignitability – recommend measures for homeowners and communities to reduce ignitability of structures.

To participate in the planning watch our website or email DFSCmiller@comcast.net

Right of Entry Agreement with East Bay Regional Park District

2010 also heralded in a signed "Right of Entry Agreement!" The agreement is the first of its kind between the East Bay Regional Park District and residents. Facilitated by the Diablo Fire Safe Council, the agreement formalizes a working relationship that is also supported by the Kensington Fire Protection District and El Cerrito Fire Department.

2011 Work Plan

The 2011 Work Plan for the Right of Entry spells out work with four different coordinators focusing on fuel management from Cannon Drive to Purdue Avenue in Kensington, California. Diablo Fire Safe Council was able to offer cost share to these groups' sweat equity with funding provided by a National Fire Plan grant from the USDA Forest Service through the California Fire Safe Council. There are plans afoot for future partnerships with the Beloit Dad's Club and expansion north to the El Cerrito Border. Follow their progress on the DFSC website.

What's in your toolkit?

A: An informal survey of woodland elves revealed a multitude of tools they would never leave home without when they venture into the wildland to reduce fuel loads. Did your favorite tool make their list?

- The electric weed wacker and several 100 feet of extension cords
- A bottle of blue "Dawn" to ward off the effects of poison oak
- Weed wrench for French broom

- Sunscreen
- The chipper and a rake to spread the chips and keep the weeds down
- Gloves and pruning shears that just fit my hands
- My fuel reduction contractor

Share your favorite tip to creating defensible space.

Email DFSCmiller@comcast.net - Type "more tool tips" in the subject line.



Tewksbury's First Chipping Day

McBryde Avenue neighborhood chipping project began when a few concerned neighbors attended the East Richmond fire safety workshop sponsored by Contra Costa Supervisor John Goia. They heard about what they could do to make their neighborhood more defensible from wildfires and about potential funding for community projects.

Working just a few weekends these neighbors and others cut brush, pulled vines, pruned the lower limbs of trees from around their homes and stacked piles along the edge of McBryde Avenue.

On a bright Thursday morning in mid November two Davey Tree Service workers began to make their way down the avenue. Within just a few hours all of the piles were gone. Chips were distributed where neighbors requested. All that was left were a few scattered leaves and twigs to tell the story of the Tewksbury neighborhood's first chipping day.

Community Partners and Participants

DFSC is a non-profit organization whose mission is to reduce the impact of wildland fire in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. While we cannot stop the next wildfire, we can help prepare to reduce potential damage and speed recovery by bringing together residents, agencies and resources.

Community Partners & Participants in our programs include:

Acalanes School District
Arthur Young Debris Removal
Bernard Avenue Neighbors
Bodhaine Disking & Grading
CAL FIRE Santa Clara Unit
Camp Herms Boyscout Camp
California Fire Safe Council
Canon Drive & Plateau Drive Neighbors
Canyon Neighbors
City of Oakland Fire Department
Concepts for the Garden
Contra Costa Fire Chiefs Association
Contra Costa Fire Protection District
Diablo Lawnscape
D&H Landscaping
East Bay Municipal Utilities District

East Bay Regional Park District
Ed Crownholm Hauling Pros
El Cerrito Fire Department
El Sobrante Neighbors
Fairweather Gardening Service
Hills Emergency Forum
Horticultural Services Ltd.
Kensington Fire District
Kensington Fuel Reduction Project
Lake Avenue Neighbors
Los Altos Drive Neighbors
McBryde Avenue Neighbors
Moraga-Orinda Fire District
Plant Decor
Pacific Gas and Electric
Purdue Drive Neighbors
Professional Landscape Management

Oakland Wildfire Prevention District
Orinda Public Library
Richmond Fire Department
Rossmoor, Walnut Creek
San Ramon Valley Fire Protection District
Safe Solutions Group
Sequoia Landscape Specialities
Simonds Design
Sunny Hills Aquatic Center
Supervisor John Gioia & Staff
Terra Linda Design
US Forest Service
Waraner Bros. Tree Service
Wildland Resource Management Inc

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DFSC Update

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P.O. Box 18616
Oakland, CA 94619
877-725-6803

email: DFSCMiller@comcast.net
web: www.diablofiresafe.org

Working and living in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties means learning to live with wildfires.