

GRVSFB FAQs

What is a shaded fuel break?

A shaded fuel break is a strategic area where flammable vegetation is modified. In forested areas, ladder fuels and woody understory vegetation are thinned by removing dead and dying shrubs, limbing of trees, and other vegetation trimming and removal. Maintaining a canopy provides shade, which can reduce growth of weedy understory species. In some cases, trees are removed if they are non-native, hazardous, unhealthy, dead, or are small in diameter and overcrowded. Overstory and understory vegetation may be spatially separated so that a ground fire will not burn too hot or ascend into the tree canopy and turn into a crown fire, which typically increases wildfire intensity. In grasslands, vegetation will generally remain, but encroaching shrubs and trees may be limbed, thinned, or removed.

What is the purpose of the proposed shaded fuel break?

The purpose of the proposed shaded fuel break is to create and maintain a continuous reduced-fuel and forest-health-restoration zone around the communities in Central Marin to reduce wildfire hazards. The shaded fuel break treatments are intended to reduce wildfire intensity and rate of spread, as well as to provide strategic and safer locations for firefighters and emergency personnel to fight a wildfire in the event of ignition. This work also makes evacuations of neighborhoods safer. Reducing fuel loading reduces intensity of a fire, which then reduces the uplift and transport of large embers that can result in spot fires downwind. To achieve this goal, the proposed shaded fuel break would reduce excess and ladder fuels within a fuel break generally 200 feet wide (but up to 300 feet or less than 200 feet, where appropriate) and would restore forest health by enhancing native, fire-resilient plant communities, primarily through weed and dead vegetation removal.

Will the proposed treatments remove native shrubs or trees?

Treatments would focus first on removal of invasive and non-native, fire hazardous vegetation, removal of dead and dying vegetation, and limbing of native trees to mimic conditions that might exist in a natural environment where natural fires were allowed to occur. All healthy, mature native trees would be left intact and in place unless removal is required due to structural or health defects that place infrastructure or lives at risk.

When will the proposed shaded fuel break treatments be implemented?

The initial shaded fuel break treatments are anticipated to begin in July 2022 and continue through January 2027. Treatments would continue annually between July and January as needed based on the availability of funds for that year. Maintenance would be ongoing annually or every 3 to 5 years, typically, depending on the type of vegetation maintenance that

is needed. Areas with broom or other fast-growing invasive species are anticipated to be treated every 1 to 3 years, depending upon the condition of the sites.

Where will the proposed shaded fuel break treatments be implemented?

The shaded fuel break treatments are anticipated to occur along the entirety of the proposed shaded fuel break but not all during the same year. Each year, specific locations would be determined based on the treatment modeling, availability of funds for treatments, field verification, and project-specific logistics for that year.

Will the entire proposed 300-foot fuel break be treated?

Work would occur within the typically 200-foot-wide fuel break around structures in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) at the periphery of communities adjacent to undeveloped open spaces. Portions of the fuel break may extend up to 300 feet from structures or may be less than 200 feet, based on topography, site conditions, and land management constraints. Within the portion of the fuel break, generally 100 to 150 feet from structures, treatments may include higher intensity fuel reduction typical of defensible space, with a focus on vertical and horizontal spacing in addition to removal of invasive species and dead and dying vegetation, if required by local fire codes or ordinances. Beyond 100 to 150 feet from structures, vegetation treatments would be lower intensity, focused primarily on removal of invasive and non-native, fire hazardous vegetation, removal of dead and dying vegetation, and limbing of native trees to mimic conditions that might exist in a natural environment where natural fires were allowed to occur.

How will cut vegetative material from the proposed treatments be processed?

Project debris would generally be processed through chipping and hauling, chipping and broadcasting, or burning. The cut vegetation materials may be processed in a variety of ways if off-hauled, including but not limited to use in pyrolysis-biomass conversion or enhanced composting. The MWPA is participating in a biomass recovery study to identify long-term, high-value solutions for managing domestic green waste and biomass produced by wildfire hazard reduction activities throughout the County over the next ten to twenty years. Following completion of the study, additional methods of biomass processing may be used.

When will the environmental document be available for public review?

The MWPA is evaluating the proposed treatments for California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) compliance as later activities covered by California Department of Forestry and Fire Prevention's (CAL FIRE) California Vegetation Treatment Program (CalVTP) Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) using the Project-Specific Analysis (PSA) checklist. The PSA process does not require a public review period per the CalVTP PEIR. CAL FIRE includes information about proposed projects on an [online viewer](#) at least 15 days prior to filing the

Notice of Determination for a project. The PSA is then uploaded to the [CalVTP website](#) after it has been approved.

The MWPA anticipates making the PSA and Addendum available to the public the Friday prior to the MWPA's approval of the project at the MWPA Board of Director's meeting that is currently scheduled for June 16, 2022. The public may view the PSA and Addendum during this time and provide feedback to the MWPA.

Prior to implementation, the MWPA, Central Marin Fire, and other fire agencies in the Greater Ross Valley area will host a public meeting to share project updates.

What is a "PSA"?

A Project Specific Analysis (PSA) is a tool that project proponents can use under CalVTP to comply with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) if they are proposing vegetation treatments consistent with the CalVTP PEIR. A project proponent is any local or state agency providing funding or having land ownership and/or management or other regulatory responsibility in the treatable landscape. The PSA is a site-specific analysis of whether the activities and impacts of a proposed vegetation treatment project are within the scope of those analyzed in the Program EIR.