

Chipper Day Annual Report 2023

Delivered on 1/29/2024



2023 Highlights

14,253 cubic yards of flammable material removed

Average of 2.83 cubic yards per pickup

4,454 completed pickups county-wide

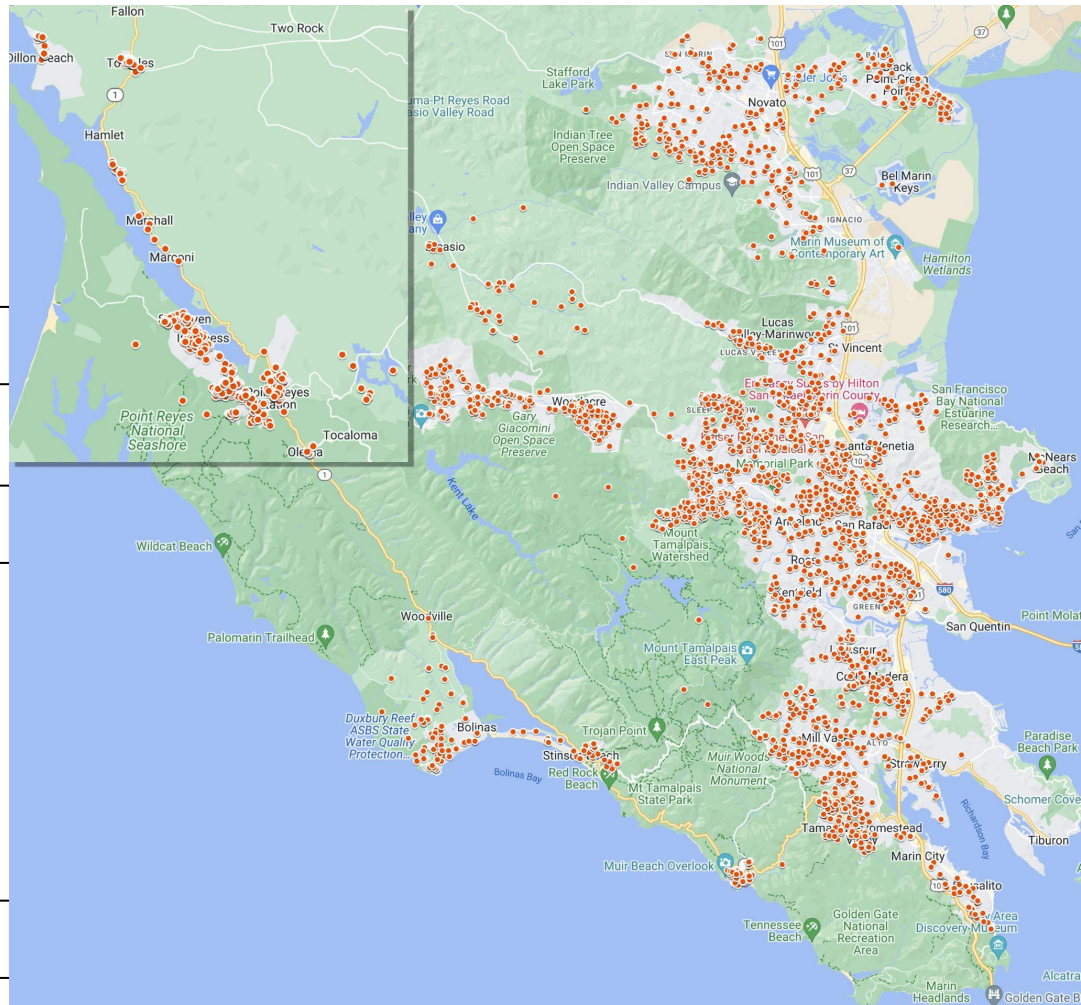
A 35% increase from last season

18% increase in new participants to the program

Targeted marketing campaign throughout the season helps raise awareness of the program around Marin.

More opportunities to participate

Each JPA Zone received 5 weeks of chipping in 2023; a 67% increase from 2022



What is the Marin Chipper Program?

The Marin Chipper Program, also known as Marin Chipper Day, is a vegetation management program run by the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA). The program provides for the curbside pickup, chipping, and disposal of vegetation material from residential properties located within the five MWPA Zones..

Purpose

Removal and disposal of vegetation is time consuming and costly. The purpose of the Chipper program is to assist Marin residents with their efforts to create and maintain Defensible Space around their homes by providing a free and convenient service for the disposal of their excess vegetation.

Impact

Curbside pickup programs, like the Marin Chipper Program, generate a wide array of positive outcomes, including:

1) Reduction of Hazardous Vegetation & Creation of Defensible Space

In a 2021 survey of residents who participated in similar program in another county, 87.1% of respondents cited the curbside chipper program as the reason for removing excess vegetation on their property. Additionally, jurisdictions that coordinate chipping services with Defensible Space inspections show marked increases in the amount of hazardous vegetation removed from their communities.

2) Improved Community Preparedness

The event-based structure of the Marin Chipper Program strengthens communication and cooperation between neighbors as they work to remove fuels in preparation for their chipping event. It also increases knowledge of fire-smart landscaping techniques among residents. This enhanced neighborhood coordination is a hallmark of fire-adapted communities.

3) Minimizing Emissions

Event-based chipper programs, like the Marin Chipper Program, use large "chipper trucks" that follow optimized routes. One Chipper Truck is equivalent to seventeen small landscaper trucks in terms of volume of material that can be transported to disposal sites. The bottom line? Fewer trucks on the street and a reduction in CO2 emissions.



2023 Chipper Program

The 2023 program provided 5 scheduled events for all communities within the MWPA. Additionally, MWPA Member Agencies utilized the program on an ad hoc basis for special events. As was the case with the first two years of the program, the program aims to offer vegetation removal services equitably to all residents regardless of their location in the county in order to reduce fuel loads and regional fire risks.

2023 saw no significant Wildfire events in the Northern Bay Area. However, some areas of Marin experienced smaller grass fires during the summer months. Throughout the season, the Marin Chipper Day Program continued to support residents with their efforts to reduce their fuel loads and maintain Defensible Space..

The program continued to utilize software developed by Fire Aside Inc., a Marin based company. The ability of the software to manage and track reservations, plan the most efficient routes, and allow crews to input pile size estimates along with pile photographs was invaluable to the success of the season.



Chipper crews working on piles in West Marin

New schedule offers more pickup opportunities with less wait time between events

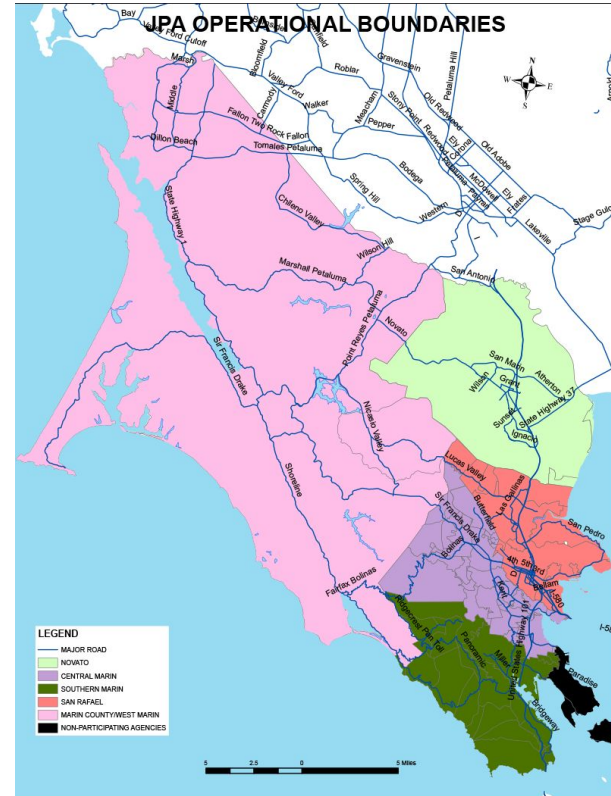
Past seasons of the Chipper Day program have centered around a schedule that was broken into two identical rounds of chipping - one in late spring/early summer and one in late summer/early fall. This left a service gap of roughly 11 weeks in between pickup opportunities and only a maximum of three pickups per season when including the extra chipping event that took place in November 2022.

After reading through resident feedback at the end of the 2022 season, it became clear that residents desired more service opportunities. Staff worked during the off season to develop a new schedule structure to increase pickup opportunities for all residents while decreasing the wait time between each event. The schedule developed was based on the model used for the 2022 extra chipping events, focusing all crews in one of the 5 MWPA zones each week and rotating zones every week. The resulting 25-week schedule resulted in five pickup opportunities for all residents within the JPA, with events occurring roughly every five weeks. Within each MWPA zone, subzones were created to ensure all communities within the zone had equal opportunities to participate in each event. The implementation of the new schedule continued the program's trend of increased service opportunities each season while reducing the wait between events by more than 50%.

New for 2023

For the 2023 season, the program schedule was restructured so that all crews focused on one of the 5 MWPA zones each week, rotating around the JPA throughout the season. This new schedule resulted in 5 events during the season for all residents. With all crews dedicated to working in a single zone each week, they were able to better support each other when encountering larger piles and/or handling complex situations.

In addition to the restructured schedule, an updated online reservation portal was built and text message reminders were added prior to the launch of the 2023 season. Both of these updates helped improve the overall user experience and were applauded by the public.



PROGRAM GOALS

Over the years, the residential chipping programs throughout the County have subscribed to a static and recurring list of goals. Not least of which is simply the removal of hazardous vegetation and the dissemination of prevention and safety information.

The 2023 season saw the continued commitment to the goals laid out during the past seasons. MWPA strives to provide the free services of the Chipper Day Program to all residents of Marin in an equitable fashion as well as to assist in lowering the carbon footprint associated with residential cleanup and vegetation removal.

Equitable distribution of services and provide opportunity for more low income and aging residents to access the program

Reduce hazardous vegetation on residential property

Increase program participation with curbside service

Reduce environmental impact by greatly decreasing number of trips to pick up and dispose of material

Increase program visibility with improved advertising

Educate the public about the need to maintain defensible space on private property

Program Management

What does it take to operate a curbside chipping program that covers 90% of Marin & serves thousands of residents throughout the year?

Staff

The 2023 program was managed by Steven Peters and Brendan Devlin, two Marin County residents who are passionate about serving the community and mitigating wildfire risk. Here's a "behind the scenes" peek at what is involved in planning and operating such a large and complex program.

Pre-season planning

Program planning begins in January and involves the creation of a detailed plan outlining the size, scope, and design of the upcoming year's program. Program Managers meet with local government representatives, fire officials, and members of the public to discuss logistics, answer questions, and solicit feedback.

Once the plan is finalized, an RFP is published and the contractor selection process begins. Program Managers collaborate with partners to review and analyze all bids, vet the finalists, and make recommendations.

Chipping season activities

Operating the program is a 7 day a week job from mid-May until the beginning of December. In addition to supervising 4 chipper crews every day during the week, Program Managers respond to thousands of inquiries from the public throughout the season. Answering questions, handling logistical "curveballs," and solving complex problems, are all in a day's work. Behind the scenes, Program Managers handle all the necessary Finance, Compliance, and Reporting functions that come with running a public program with a \$1.25 MM+ budget. Detailed reports are created and presented at monthly meetings of the MWPA Board. Coordinating services with MWPA Member Agencies to support the overall mission of fuel reduction and marketing the program to Marin County residents are also key responsibilities handled by the Program Managers.

Partnership with Fire Aside generates positive results

The end of the 2022 season saw Program Staff focused on reducing the number of “Could Not Finds”(CNFs) in order to improve overall efficiency. Staff met with Fire Aside leaders extensively during the off season to discuss ideas and develop new solutions. Fire Aside listened closely and took action. Prior to the start of the 2023 season, Fire Aside introduced text message reminders and a revamped reservation portal to allow for easier account management (i.e., adjusting and cancelling reservations). These enhancements helped participants plan for their chipper event and cancel if needed.

The offseason planning and hard work paid off. The goal for the 2023 season was to reduce the CNF rate from 20% to 10%. At the conclusion of the 2023 season the CNF rate was 9.8%.

Coordination with MCFD Fire Foundry Program

During the early stages of season planning, Program Staff met with Marin County Fire Department's Fire Foundry training program to discuss how Foundry crews could be utilized during the chipper season.

Early season coordination

Initially, Foundry crews were utilized to remove large piles that would otherwise overwhelm the standard program pile size and crew capacity. In this way, the program sought to address the concerns from residents with more significant vegetation management needs who require additional assistance .



**FIRE
FOUNDRY**

Late season coordination

As the season progressed, the Foundry was also utilized to help with special events and ad hoc requests from Member Agencies. This included community “green waste drop off days,” which allowed residents the opportunity to drop off large amounts of vegetation while also reducing the access challenges some large pile properties were presenting. In addition to staffing green waste drop off days, Foundry crews also assisted the main program during weeks when reservations were extremely high. In total, the Fire Foundry was responsible for removing 296.5 cubic yards of vegetation through its coordination with the Chipper Program.

Continued public outreach in 2023

The 2023 season saw program staff continue to utilize local news outlets and social media to “spread the word” about the program

In order to reach additional portions of the population who may not have heard of the program before, program staff placed advertisements in the Marin Independent Journal in both a digital and print capacity. Additionally, picket-style yard signs were deployed in multiple locations throughout the county.

In addition to utilizing Member Agency social media channels and advertising in the Marin Independent Journal, ads were also placed in local town and community newsletters.



With DeSantis', Florida Dems fight to be seen
POLITICS
By Brenda Fortinigo
Tallahassee, Fla. (AP) — Florida Democrats are trying to get their party leaders' faces back in voters' minds as they prepare for a special election in November.

Florida officials cut key data from study
By Brenda Fortinigo
Tallahassee, Fla. (AP) — An analysis of the state's fire loss data shows that Florida's fire insurance industry is not paying its fair share of the cost of fire suppression.

Tennessee becomes new front in battle for American democracy
POLITICS
By Brenda Fortinigo
Nashville, Tenn. (AP) — Tennessee is becoming a battleground state in the fight to protect American democracy.

CHIPPER DAYS
FREE VEGETATION REMOVAL
Reduce wildfire hazards in Marin by removing what fuels them. Register at chipperday.com/marin



Liked by firesafe_marin and 8 others
marinwildfire HEY MARIN RESIDENTS! Have extra branches and woody debris that are piling up in your yard? Make an appointment at CHIPPERDAY.COM/MARIN to get it chipped and hauled away



Targeted awareness campaigns using performance data

During the 2023 season, Program Staff and Fire Aside executed a pilot marketing campaign with the following goals:

1. Expand awareness by reaching residents who have not used the program previously.
2. Target neighborhoods where historical participation was lower than other areas.
3. Increase overall usage in the service by all residents.

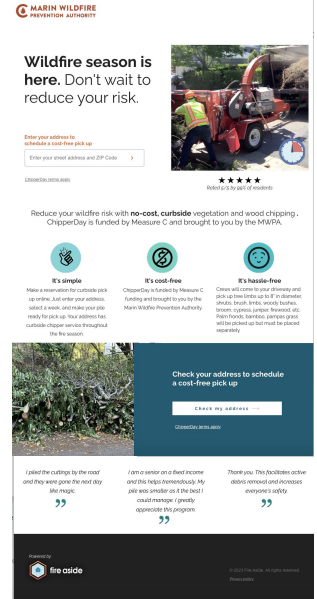
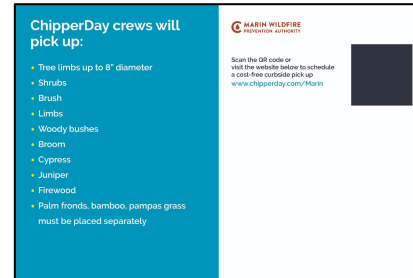
Marketing Pilot results

18% increase in first time chippers compared to 2022 (1,728 residents)

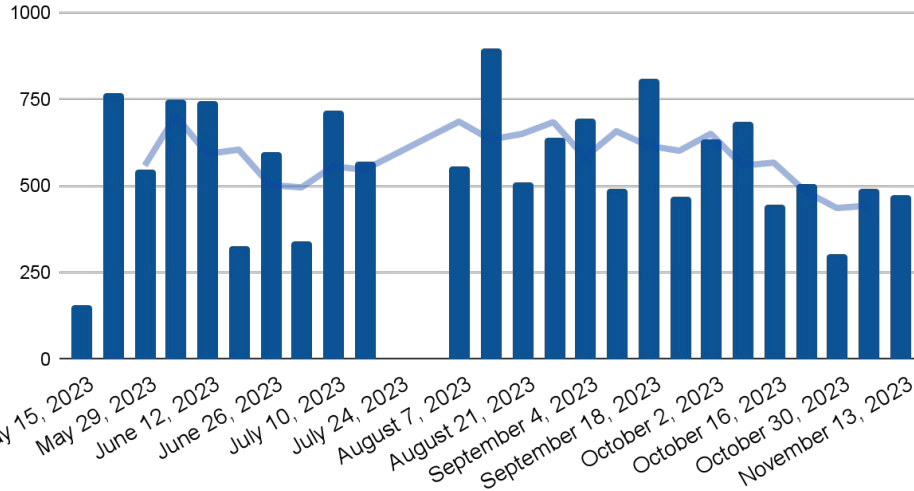
64% increase in first time chippers in communities with historical low participating. (113% increase in cubic yards chipped in same communities)

Pilot Conclusion:

Through the use of targeted messages (direct mail, email, social) the program is able to expand participation. This includes new members of the community and the volume of hazards fuel removed.



Cubic volume removed per event



	All County*	FireWise Communities
Cubic volume	14,253	6,932
Completed pickups	4,454	3,050

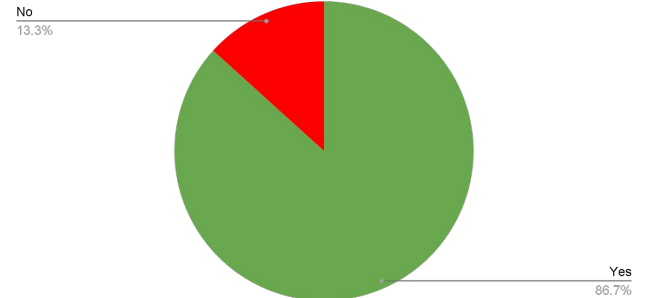
*All county refers to all MWPA participating jurisdictions (ie excludes Tiburon)

2023 Activity Summary

The program continued in its fourth year to provide service to the residents of Marin. The program followed a new schedule format with increased pickup opportunities for all residents within the JPA that ran from May to November.

The free curb pickup program continues to overwhelmingly drive resident behavior.

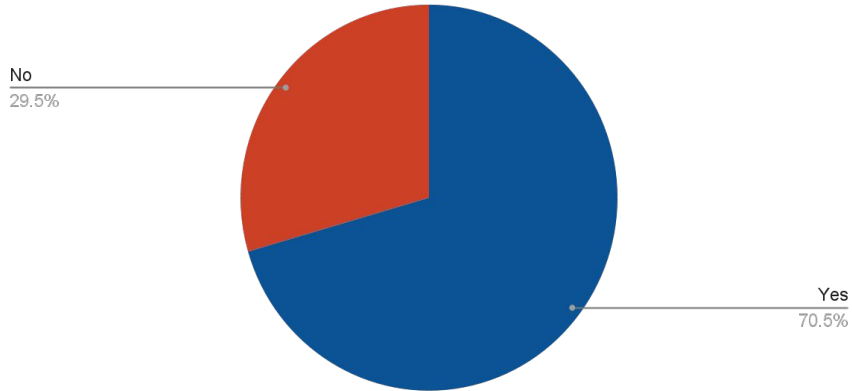
Did the free chipping program cause you to remove the vegetation?



The DSI program is helping drive removal of hazardous material

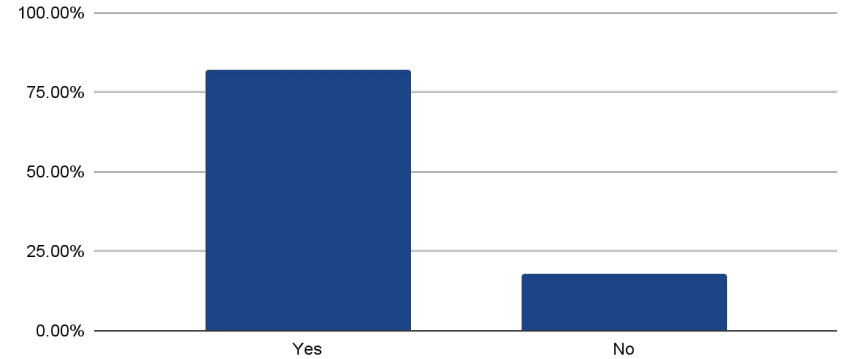
Did participants have their free Defensible Space and Home Hardening evaluation this year?

*Based on 1,954 participants who answered post pick up survey



Did the report help you identify fire hazardous vegetation to remove for this ChipperDay or your green waste bin?

n= 1368 out of 1954 people answered this question



Curbside program eliminates 90% of the miles associated with removal of this material

1 Chipper Truck = 17+ small landscaper pickup trucks

By chipping on site and using larger capacity trucks, the program is able to reduce thousands of small truck trips to the transfer station. This year we estimate¹ we eliminated over 24,100 kg of CO₂

¹Average of 7.2 miles from property to transfer station, uses EPA estimate of 400 grams CO₂ per passenger vehicle, and each chipper truck eliminates trips by 17 small pickup trucks

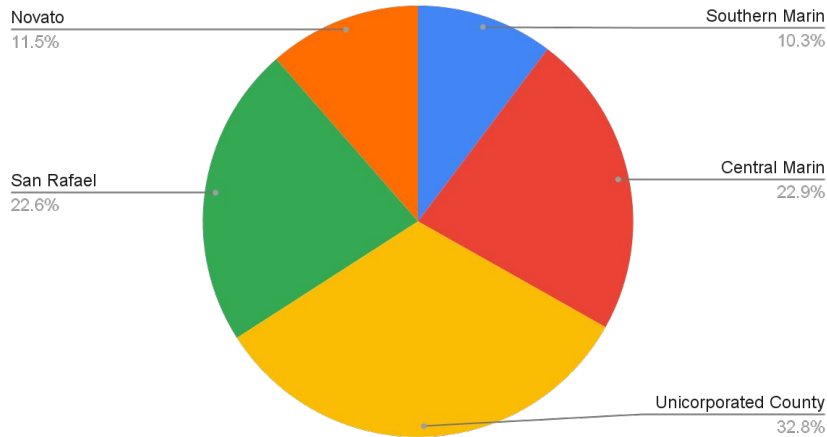


"We have a large wooded area on our property with redwood and bay trees. We continuously try to remove dead or fallen trees and Scotch Broom. We are very appreciative of the chipper program in helping to get rid of said trees and debris. In past years we've made numerous trips hauling the debris to the Nicasio dump site. The chipper program has saved us time, hauling, and money. The only improvement would be if it could be done twice a year. Thank you for this program."

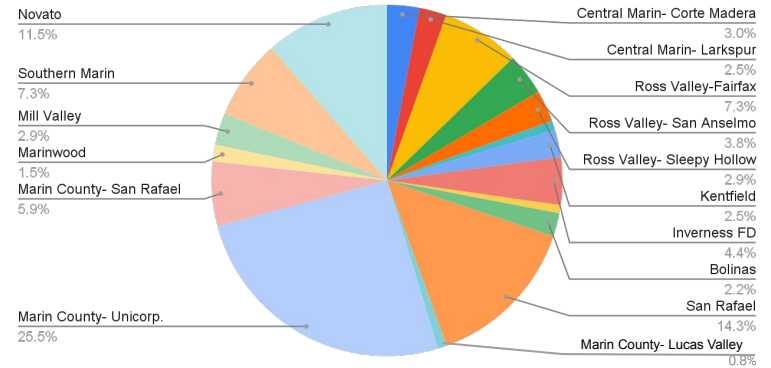
Service Areas

Pickups were tracked both by area collected in and agency jurisdiction.

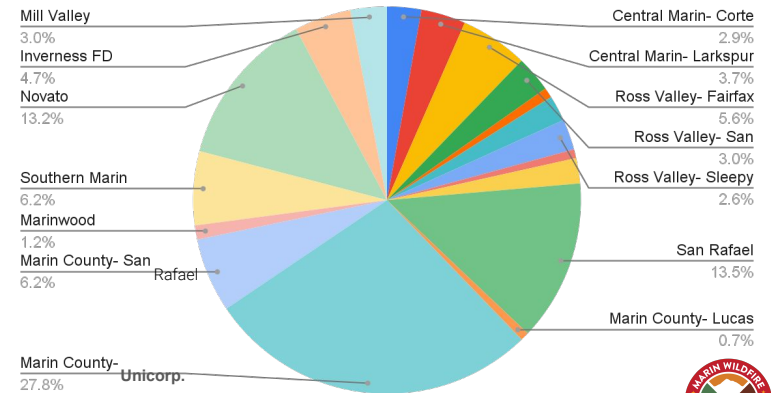
Pickups by Service Area



Pickups by Agency



Volume by Agency



Spending by zone for FY23

The Chipper program functions on a calendar year format. Money allocated to the program must cover the latter portion of the current season and the beginning of the following season in order to be in line with the MWPA fiscal year.

At the conclusion of FY23 program spending was broken down to reflect the amount spent in each of the five MWPA JPA zones.

Central Marin	\$218,996
West Marin	\$184,158
Novato	\$195,770
San Rafael	\$218,996
Southern Marin	\$218,996
Total	\$1,036,916

Highlights from the public

“The program is a wonderful offering for the community and very much appreciated. It is run beautifully and I can't think of any improvements!”

“Just wanted to thank you for the excellent service! From the original email which was well designed and easy to use, to this morning's pick up, the entire process couldn't have been better. Please extend my appreciation to all involved.”

“The program gets me energized to clear my defensible space throughout the year and still lots to do even in the rainy season, appreciate the program a lot!!!”

“Thanks to you we have made a lot of improvements to our property to make it more fire safe. The chipping crew did a fantastic job and left the area cleaner than when they arrived.”



“We just hope it continues! So helpful and it actually gets our neighborhood talking about cleaning up. It's very positive and successful in our experience. Thank you!!”

“It's a great program and educates for defensible space and alerts community on fire prevention.”

“It's a fantastic service. I will definitely use it again next time it's available. I love it and want to thank you for the great job the crew did.”

“Great program, especially for new owners of neglected properties.”



Looking Ahead

The Marin Chipper Program will continue to utilize the 5-zone approach and potentially add even more pickup opportunities in the 2024 season. Additionally, Program Staff will work closely with Defensible Space Inspection teams to provide a resource for residents looking to act on their inspection reports and help to increase resident engagement with their inspection reports.

The program also plans to take steps to reduce the stated service window for all 2024 events. More information on this will be released in the spring of 2024.

Finally, the Chipper Day Program will continue its work with the Fire Foundry program to create more chipping opportunities for residents living in high-risk areas of Marin and offer additional targeted services where they can have the largest impact.



Chipper crews working on piles in Novato

Thank You





In partnership and support with:

Bolinas Fire District
City of Larkspur
City of Mill Valley
City of San Rafael
County of Marin
Fire Aside
Fire Safe Marin
Inverness Public Utility District
Kentfield Fire Protection District
Marinwood Community Services District
Muir Beach Community Services District
Novato Fire Protection District
Sleepy Hollow Fire Protection District
Southern Marin Fire Protection District
Stinson Beach Fire Protection District
Town of Corte Madera
Town of Fairfax
Town of Ross
Town of San Anselmo

