

From: [Rob Stump](#)
To: [Maria Ristow](#); [Mary Badame](#); [Rob Rennie](#); [Matthew Hudes](#); [Rob Moore](#)
Cc: [Laurel Prevetti](#); [Nicolle Burnham](#); [Clerk](#)
Subject: Re: Strategic Priorities - Wildfire Preparedness and Prevention
Date: Monday, March 20, 2023 6:32:59 PM
Attachments: [Item 12-Roadside Fuel Reduction Program 230321.pdf](#)

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Town Council Members,

Attached is some background information on Roadside Fuel Reduction that I would like to provide as you consider/discuss Item 12 on your agenda tomorrow evening.

As usual, I want to make myself available to the Town to provide legwork and leadership on wildfire initiatives if and when you would like to call on me.

Thank you,

Rob Stump



Los Gatos Town Council

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March 20, 2023

Town Council Members:

First, thanks for your continued focus on wildfire preparation and prevention. It is an item that requires ongoing focus, planning and funding.

Speaking of funding, I have created a table that provides a view of funding for roadside fuel reduction that has been committed or needs to be committed through FYs 24/25 and 25/26 (Public Works can confirm or correct my numbers as appropriate). When roadside fuel reduction was being planned and programmed in 2019, it was projected to be a six-year project (first pass). The cost per year was projected to be \$500,000. Over the life of the project, the Town was projected to spend \$3 million. Here is the overall status of funding past, present and future:

FY	Funding Source	\$ Amount	Town \$s	Notes
2020/2021	Town of LG	\$500,000	\$500,000	Year 1 of 6 completed
2021/2022	Town of LG	\$500,000	\$500,000	Year 2 of 6 completed
2022/2023	USDA	\$750,000	\$0	Year 3 of 6 to be completed
2023/2024	Town of LG	\$750,000	\$750,000	Town match for USDA grant (BBB)
	FEMA/Town of LG	\$36,750	\$8,750	Development Work, no fuel reduction. Town match secures total Phase I funding of \$36,750.
2024/25, 2025/26	FEMA/Town of LG	\$1,926,419	\$482,042	Town match of \$482,042, secures total Phase II funding of \$1,926,419.
Totals		\$4,463,169	\$2,240,792	Town will have contributed an average of \$375,000 over a six-year period

If the funding for FYs 23/24 (\$750,000) and 24/25 (\$482,042) is approved, the Town will have exceeded the original projected funding of \$3,000,000 for a first pass through the 31 miles of roadway. This “additional” funding can be put to good use. Here are some thoughts:

1. Tree Removal – Public Safety Threat: the current case in point would be the Eucalyptus trees on Overlook Road. Under the circumstances, I think it would be appropriate for the Town to use some funds purposed for roadside fuel reduction for removal of the Overlook Road trees. Since the funding level this year is \$750,000, we may be able to accomplish some or all of the Overlook Eucalyptus removal and still achieve 5 miles of roadside fuel reduction. Public Works will be able to determine if both can be accomplished. Otherwise, \$250,000 should be applied to Overlook tree removal in 2023. With that level of funding, a majority of the trees can be removed and others can be scaled-down to a safer height until they can be removed at a later date.
2. Weed Abatement: weed abatement goes hand-in-hand with roadside fuel reduction. As you have heard me suggest, we need to consider two weed abatement passes on the same 31 miles of roadway. A rough cost estimate for this work is between \$300,000-\$450,000/year (abatement costs ranging from \$5,000 to \$7,500/mile).

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3. Accelerated removal of non-native trees e.g., Eucalyptus: consider removing all Eucalyptus trees on Town owned rights-of-way in the VHFHSZ. This can be done with existing roadside fuel reduction funding. We should also pursue grants that offer a public/private cost sharing for removal of Eucalyptus (and other flammable trees) to assist and/or incent private property owners to remove these trees.
4. Repeat the Trim Cycle: if there are funds remaining, we should revisit the roadways completed in FYs 20/21 and 21/22. Living on Foster Road, one of the first to be addressed, I can tell you the roadside foliage is growing rapidly. In a second pass, the Town may also decide to remove trees left in place as a cost saving measure.

The Council should take this action in FY23/24:

1. 23/24: approve \$750,000 for Roadside Fuel Reduction. This funding will ensure we meet the matching requirements from the USDA grant = \$750,000.
2. Overlook Road Eucalyptus Removal: authorize Parks and Public Works to use up to \$250,000 from the roadside fuel reduction funding to remove and radically reduce the height of any remaining trees.

From a longer-term perspective, the Council should note that it needs to approve \$482,042 for FY 24/25 for Roadside Fuel Reduction to meet the required FEMA grant match. The funding approved by the Council will trigger FEMA's commitment of an additional \$1,444,377 to our roadside fuel reduction efforts.

Once again, thank you for your efforts in making Los Gatos more wildfire resilient!

Best regards,

Rob Stump

Mary O Connell

Overlook Road Eucalyptus Tree Removal

To: Los Gatos Town Council

The 18 eucalyptus trees on Overlook Road are a threat to life. They are a real concern to residents who live, walk and drive under these trees, particularly during winter storms and fire season. This petition is a call for action to The Los Gatos town council. These trees need to be removed immediately and replaced with more native and appropriate trees. Help us convince Los Gatos Town Council by signing our petition.

Why is this important?

On January 11, the day after the catastrophic failure of two of these trees, Mr. Geddes a local independent arborist, inspected all of the eucalyptus trees, both fallen and standing. He inspected them again at the end of January before the destruction of the two stumps. Mr. Geddes's report speaks for itself. The trees present a "present threat to life, limb and property and infrastructure" and need to be removed. He found evidence of white root rot and was surprised by how little root mass remained to support the fallen trees. He considers it "highly likely" that the 18 remaining trees have suffered similar root zone compromise. The Town's strategy of occasional pruning could not and cannot "prevent advance of root pathogens and decay."

In addition, the Residents have consulted with the Santa Clara County Fire Department, Fire Prevention Division. The Fire Prevention Division manages the brush abatement and defensible space program and sends reminders to homeowners each January to clear vegetation, and levies financial charges against homeowners for violations and non-compliance. The Fire Department is aware of the Town's eucalyptus trees on Overlook Road, and says that they have no way to protect the Residents if these trees ignite. Again, these trees are flammable and explode in fireballs. The Fire Department would have no other choice but to retreat. Indeed, the Santa Clara County Firesafe Council highlights such fireballs as the primary reason to recently remove eucalyptus trees in Redwood Estates: "Eucalyptus trees are notorious for being extremely flammable and spreading firebrands. When the oils in the trees heat up, the plant releases flammable gas, which ignites into a fireball. This accelerates the eucalyptus fire hazards in a region and discourages firefighting efforts." See <https://sccfiresafe.org/projects/redwood-estates-hazardous-tree-removal>

Essentially, individual, as well as Town and community, wildfire preparedness efforts are meaningless in the Glen Ridge neighborhood as long as these trees are standing.

The Town has previously been advised to remove eucalyptus trees. For example, in 2020 the Town commissioned a wildfire preparedness report and recommendations from SWCA Environmental Consultants. The report is entitled, Town of Los Gatos Roadway Vegetation Management Plan. On page 4, the recommended treatments include "Removing all non-fire-resistant vegetation located within 10 feet of roadways [including] combustible vegetation such as eucalyptus trees... ."

Overlook Road is highlighted in this report as an area to be addressed. See <https://www.losgatosca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/25236/Los-Gatos-Roadside-Vegetation-Management-Plan>.

Despite this report, despite the Town's stated focus on wildfire preparedness, and despite the recent scare from the lightning complex fires of August 2020, to date, the Town has not taken the recommended actions regarding these trees - removal, pruning, nothing. Their existence contradicts all wildfire preparedness efforts in the Glen Ridge neighborhood. It appears the Town is maintaining a known hazardous and dangerous condition on its property that endangers Town residents.

Signed by 171 people:

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