



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Type: Watershed Committee/Board of Directors
Title: FY 2024 Annual BFFIP Vegetation Management Report
From: Shaun Horne, Director of Watershed Resources
Through: Ben Horenstein, General Manager
Meeting Date: September 19, 2024

TYPE OF ACTION: Action X Information Review and Refer

RECOMMENDATION: Receive report

SUMMARY: The District conducts vegetation management work on watershed lands throughout the year under the Biodiversity, Fire, and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP), which was adopted in October of 2019. Staff has prepared a BFFIP Annual Vegetation Report detailing work completed in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. Staff will provide a presentation with an overview of work completed to address wildfire hazards and to enhance biodiversity on the District’s watershed lands.

DISCUSSION: As outlined in the BFFIP and associated Environmental Impact Report, “The District will evaluate the effectiveness of annual management actions based on the findings from monitoring results. An annual board report will include the findings from monitoring and any recommendations made by District staff for modifications to methods and/or the schedule of preservations and restoration actions.” The attached BFFIP Annual Report summarizes the District’s vegetation management work, wildfire coordination, biological monitoring, and planning activities.

The District adopted its first vegetation management plan in 1995. The District’s principal management concern at the time was reducing wildfire hazards on its lands, while minimizing impacts on natural resources. The plan included the creation of a series of fuelbreaks and access roads along major ridges, and the maintenance of the fuelbreak infrastructure. In October of 2019, the District adopted the BFFIP which described the actions the District would implement to reduce wildfire hazards and to maintain and enhance ecosystem function. Under the BFFIP, 27 management actions are being implemented to fulfill the goals and approaches described in the plan. To implement the inventorying, planning, and monitoring management actions, the District conducts surveys, manages data, and creates maps. To implement the vegetation management actions, the District uses a combination of manual and mechanical techniques to achieve the BFFIP management actions targets. On a regular basis, the District evaluates the effectiveness of its various techniques and progress towards meeting the BFFIP targets, and annually it reports its findings to the Board and public.

Vegetation management under the BFFIP aims to reduce fuel loads, maintain fuelbreak infrastructure, preserve defensible space, and reduce invasive weed species. Vegetation management is conducted continuously throughout the year with the chief goals of reducing fuel loads and maintaining the watershed’s biological diversity, which reduce risks to District infrastructure and promote improved water quality. To document the District’s annual vegetation management work, staff has prepared the BFFIP Annual Report for the fifth year of implementation. The report summarizes the District’s implementation activities carried out during FY 2024, from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024. It includes information on vegetation treatment types, total acres managed, and vegetation management costs. Also included in the report is an overview of the District’s environmental compliance and biological monitoring activities. The final section reviews progress towards meeting the BFFIP year 5 targets, and priorities for the upcoming year.

Table 1 Overview of Vegetation Management Targets

Management Actions	Year 5 Targets	Year 5 Completed	Year 6 Thresholds
MA-20.1 Maintain existing fuel breaks	200 acres	193 Acres	200 acres
MA-20.2 Mow fine fuels	50 acres	48 Acres	50 acres
MA-20.3 Broom Work*	765 acres	829 Acres	765 acres
MA-20.4 Roadside mowing	50 acres	49 Acres	50 acres
MA-20.5 Dam maintenance	50 acres	42 Acres	50 acres
MA-21 New fuelbreak construction	15 acres	14 Acres	10 acres
MA 22.1 EDRR surveys	150 miles	66 Miles	150 miles
MA 22.2 EDRR weed treatments	100 patches	186 patches	100 patches
MA 23.1 Forest fuel reduction**	100 acres	98 Acres	100 acres
MA 23.2 Forest maintenance**	300 acres	115 Acres	300 acres
MA 23.3 Forest Rx burn	2 Rx units	1 Units	2 Rx unit
MA 24.1 Douglas fir thinning	200 acres	198 Acres	200 acres
MA 24.2 Oak & grassland Rx burn	3 units	1 Unit	3 units
MA 24.5 Goatgrass removal	35 Acres	18 Acres	35 Acres
MA 24.6 Yellow star removal	120 Acres	123 Acres	120 Acres
MA 24.7 Priority weeds	-- acres	45 acres	-- acres
MA 25.1 Planting	3 projects	0 project	3 projects
MA 25.2 Habitat restoration	3 projects	3 projects	3 projects
MA 27 Weed control trials	3 project	2 projects	3 projects

*In Year 5, the three Broom related MAs 20.3, 24.3, & 24.4 were be combined as a single Management Action.

**In Year 5, MAs 23.1 & 23.2 were increased above originally approved thresholds as part of the BFFIP Addendum.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW: The District, as the Lead Agency, prepared a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) pursuant to the provisions of CEQA for the Biodiversity, Fire and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP) which was adopted in 2019 and covers all work reviewed in this Annual Report.

FISCAL IMPACT: For FY24, District budgeted BFFIP implementation costs in the Capital Program AE107 and from Operation Budgets 2044 and 2045. Additionally, District continued to utilize grant funding

from the California Coastal Conservancy and the CalFIRE Forest Health Program for forestry restoration work.

In FY24, the District treated 1,836 acres for \$3,504,490 resulting in an average cost of \$1,908/acre. After including \$312,936 in compliance costs, the total cost increased to \$3,817,426 with a per acre cost of \$2,079/acre.

FY24 total BFFIP expenditures were partially funded with \$734,010 in direct grant funding provided by the California Coastal Conservancy, and the Cal Fire Forest Health Project, plus an additional \$295K worth of labor hours for removal of weeds. Direct Grant Funding plus grant funded labor comprised approximately 25% of the total FY24 BFFIP expense.

ATTACHMENT(S):

1. Annual FY24 BFFIP Vegetation Management Report