



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Type: Board of Directors
Title: Watershed Prescribed Burn
From: Shaun Horne, Director of Watershed Resources
Through: Ben Horenstein, General Manager
Meeting Date: July 15, 2025

TYPE OF ITEM: Action X Information

RECOMMENDATION: Receive staff presentation on Mt. Tamalpais Knob II Prescribed Burn Project

SUMMARY: In October of 2019, the District adopted the Biodiversity, Fire, and Fuels Integrated Plan (BFFIP), which describes the actions the District will implement to reduce wildfire hazards and to maintain and enhance ecosystem function. The Board will receive a presentation on the recently completed prescribed burn that was carried out on the watershed in coordination with Marin County Fire (MCF) as an action identified in the BFFIP.

DISCUSSION: California is facing an unprecedented wildfire crisis as a result of decades of fire exclusion and increasing impacts associated with climate change. In many California ecosystems, biodiversity, carbon stability and overall ecological resilience are dependent on the regular occurrence of fire. In addition, the wildfire seasons over the past few years have brought record impacts to communities, critical infrastructure and ecosystems. In 2019, Marin Water adopted the BFFIP to guide land management decisions and address wildfire risk while protecting biodiversity on District watershed lands. Additionally, One Tam partner agencies completed the Marin Regional Forest Health Strategy in 2023, which furnishes a science-based framework for identifying how and where agencies can work both independently and together across jurisdictional boundaries to protect forest resiliency while helping to address wildfire hazards. The District has been increasing the pace and scale of forest resiliency work on the Mt. Tamalpais Watershed and recently completed a fire pathway analysis to evaluate the efficacy of BFFIP treatments and help refine future treatment area.

A recent study published by the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment found that “controlled burns can reduce the severity of subsequent wildfires by an average of 16%”. Under the BFFIP the District is working to conduct vegetation management in areas where future prescribed burns can be implemented periodically to reduce hazardous fuel conditions and to enhance habitat for native flora and fauna. On July 1, 2025, the District implemented the Knob II prescribed burn with Marin County Fire (MCF). The area was last burned by the District in 2007. To prepare the area for a prescribed burn the District started thinning and pile burn treatment in Knob II in February 2021. This treatment was

followed up by a mastication treatment in July of 2021. Since then, the District has returned every two years to survey and pull broom. The District worked with a consulting Burn Boss to develop the Burn Plan for Knob II, and coordinates annually with MCF to identify seasonal burn windows and sites. Preparation for the burn started on June 26 with crews from MCF Tam Crew and Fire Foundry constructing fire lines, removing hazardous vegetation, and doing hose lays around the perimeter.

The Knob II project was adjacent to a portion of Sky Oaks Road and Sunnyside Trail. Crews successfully completed the 40 acres burn and achieved all resource objectives including reducing fuel loads from dead and down materials, reducing the grass thatch layer, and reducing encroachment of trees into sensitive grassland meadows. Measures were put into place to protect areas with rare plants, nesting birds, power poles and to establish control lines around the burn unit. Natural resources staff were stationed along the trails to answer visitor questions and keep people out of the burn area. Visitor interpretation signs have been placed around the burn area to help raise community awareness around the work that is being completed under the BFFIP. The project was partially funded by a Cal Fire Forest Health Grant for the One Tam Regional Forest Health Project – Phase II, from which the District has received \$3,520,000 for BFFIP vegetation management treatments.

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 the Knob II Project.

FISCAL IMPACT: None.

ATTACHMENT(S): None.