

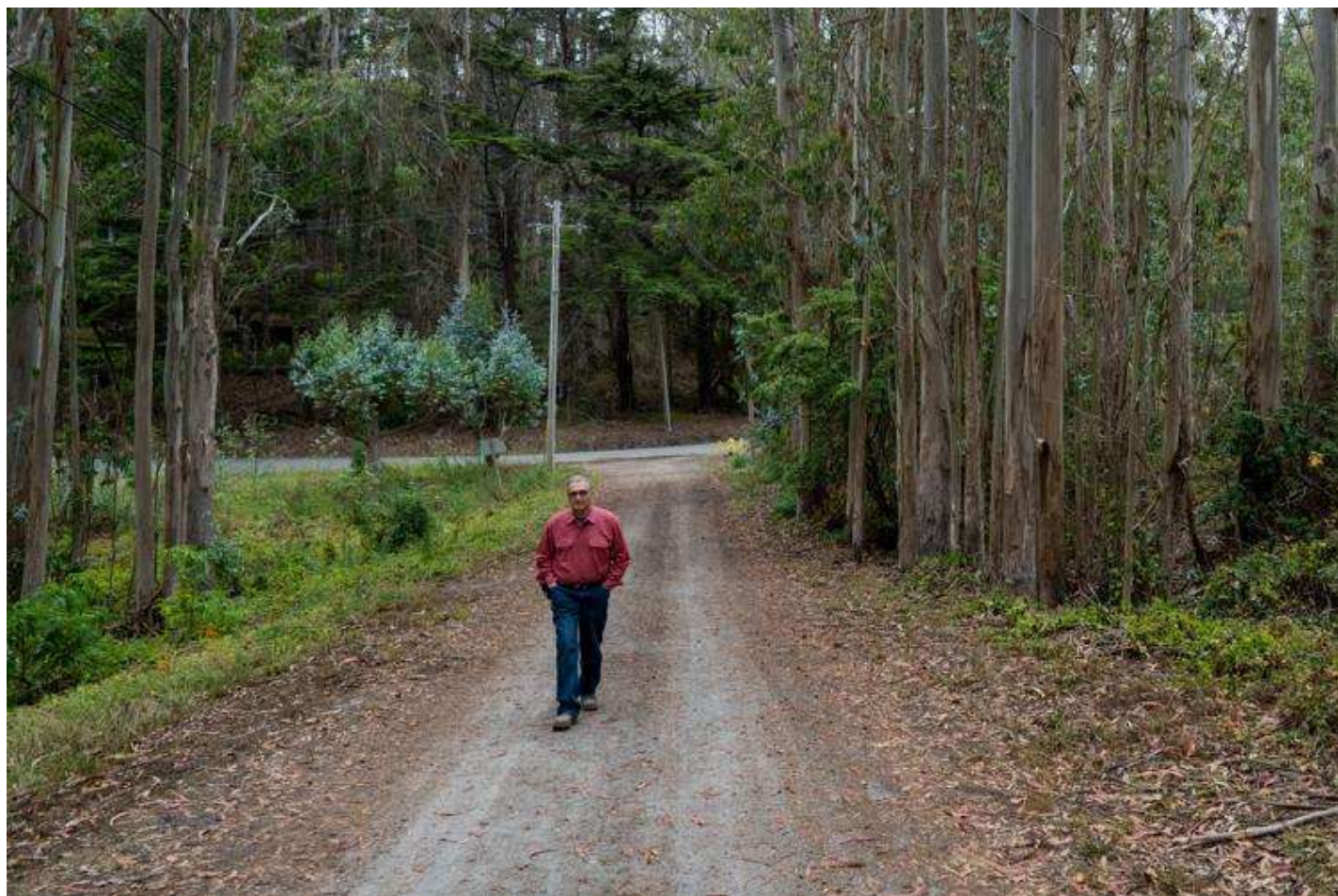
https://www.hmbreview.com/news/county-cuts-red-tape-to-remove-hazardous-trees/article_f68b22c2-df44-11eb-b0c3-f739ee27303c.html

County cuts red tape to remove hazardous trees

One-year exemption waives permit, fee

By Sarah Wright

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Property owner Larry De Young walks the road that divides private and state property where land owners have had to trim and cut trees for fire protection in Montara. Adam Pardee / Review

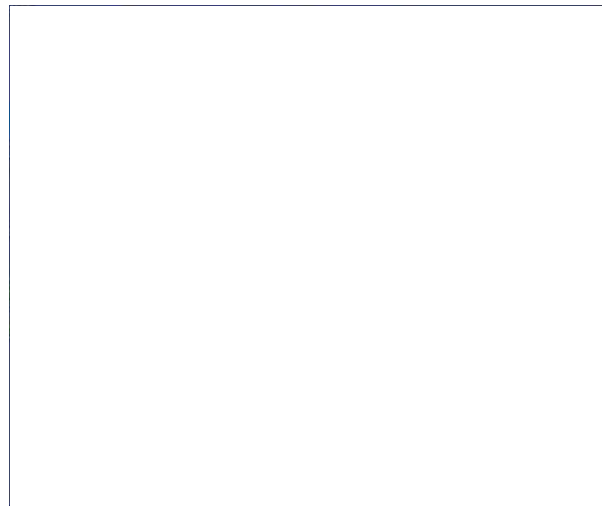
Adam Pardee / Coastside News Group

San Mateo County is now waiving permits and fees for property owners who want to remove certain trees that pose a fire risk. The exemption went into effect July 1 and will remain for one year for residents of unincorporated areas of the county.

The new exemption, issued by Community Development Director Steve Monowitz, allows landowners to remove all eucalyptus, pines, acacia, tan oak and bay trees within 100 feet of their home or 30 feet of an evacuation route without a normal permit, which costs \$350.

Notice to the county for removal of these trees is not required. Significant trees of other species, like redwoods, maples and Douglas fir, still require the normal permit.

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“Reducing the fuel load by removing trees helps in two big ways. First, it lessens the risk for the types of devastating fires we’ve seen here locally and across California in the past year,” County Supervisor Don Horsley wrote in a press release. “And second, it gives firefighters what they call the defensible space they need to protect lives and property.”

The exemption comes after a historic fire season in the county after the CZU Lightning Complex fire swept through the Santa Cruz Mountains. Cal Fire San Mateo-Santa Cruz Unit Chief Ian Larkin wrote a letter in support of the exemption, saying this year’s drought conditions and low fuel moistures could be a recipe for another local disaster, so empowering property owners to act now will reduce their fire risk.

“Exempting these trees from the tree removal permitting process will help to increase defensible space and minimize the hazard they pose to life and personal property,” Larkin wrote.

Anyone removing trees must have written permission from the property owner and is responsible for chipping, disposing of tree debris, and erosion control. Those who need help identifying exempt trees can contact the San Mateo Resource Conservation District at fire@sanmateoRCD.org.

Sarah Wright

Sarah Wright is the deputy editor for the Review. She reports on unincorporated San Mateo County and local schools. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Foreign Service from Georgetown University and has worked in policy and communications in Washington, D.C.