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County clears fire fuel from Quarry Park

Expect trail closures into July

By August Howell

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El Granada's Quarry Park has long been a hotspot for locals concerned about serious fire risk. Millions have been spent on efforts to protect the park, and this month fire crews are continuing the work.

The San Mateo County Parks Department announced that contractors began fuel reduction work in the park on June 6. It's expected to last at least six weeks. The county and San Mateo Resource Conservancy District say the effort will make the area more resilient to wildfire by treating up to 100 acres of dense fuel loads, clearing shrubs, small-diameter and flammable trees, as well as building shaded fuel breaks along fire roads and multi-use trails.

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The work is expected to cause some trail closures between Monday and Friday. Fire experts say the smaller trees and low-growing vegetation need to be removed to reduce the risk of ground fire spreading to taller trees, which can create a crown fire that's harder to contain.

The total cost to the county is estimated to be just over \$1.1 million. That cost is covered by a grant from the California State Coastal Conservancy.

Clearing this section of the park is one of three other county fuel reduction projects for Quarry Park, which in turn are just a few of the 32 identified in San Mateo County Park's five-year Wildfire Fuel Management Program. The other two at Quarry Park involve maintaining more fuel breaks and creating another one along the western boundary. The roadmap identifies more than 1,800 acres that need to be worked on over the next five years, costing \$18.7 million.

Another Coastside project on the books is a 14-acre effort at San Pedro Valley County Park near Montara Mountain, where crews are creating defensible space around neighborhoods and converting Weiler Ranch Road into a fuel break between a nearby corporation yard and water department facilities. The county is also planning to eventually treat 111 more acres elsewhere in the park and another 18 acres on the Pillar Point bluff.

The county said some mature eucalyptus trees will be cut down. Contactors will be using heavy equipment to remove trees. The machines can throw debris and can pose a safety hazard. County staff requests park visitors obey all road and trail closure signs and avoid the project area.

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Clearing the smoke

For more information about San Mateo County's ongoing Wildfire Fuel Management Program, visit smcgov.org/parks/forest-health-community-safety-initiative.

August Howell

August Howell is a staff writer for the Review covering city government and public safety. Previously, he was the Review's community, arts and sports reporter. He studied journalism at the University of Oregon.