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Forest Health in San Mateo County— A Collaborative Approach

A \$2.5 million grant from CAL FIRE's Forest Health Program is supporting the San Mateo Resource Conservation District (RCD) and a network of regional partners in their efforts to improve forest resilience, increase carbon sequestration, and reduce wildfire risk to vulnerable communities in the Santa Cruz Mountains.





approximately 445 acres at two county parks and Camp Butano Creek, a property owned and managed by the Girl Scouts of Northern California. It also involves planning for future treatments at nearby Butano State Park. The forests in these parks have high fuel loads, rugged, inaccessible topography, and have experienced years of extreme drought, threatening nearby isolated mountain communities that have limited evacuation routes. The removal of brush, dense vegetation, and diseased trees throughout project area is intended to improve growing conditions and resilience to drought, disease and wildfire for the remaining forest. These activities will immediately enhance safety for the Girl Scout camp and nearby residents. Over the project's lifetime, the treatments will ultimately help the forest sequester greenhouse gases equivalent to an estimated 15,734 metric tons of carbon dioxide.

This project was made possible by California Climate Investments funding through a CAL FIRE Forest Health grant to San Mateo RCD, and a pooling of resources from multiple partners has proved essential to the project's success. Partners include California State Parks, San Mateo County Parks, the local CAL FIRE unit, Fire Safe San Mateo County, Peninsula Open Space Trust, the Girl Scouts of Northern California, and other private landowners.

“The work wouldn’t get done [without this funding].” said Jim Gust, who manages Camp Butano Creek for the Girl Scouts. “We wouldn’t have the resources, we wouldn’t have the knowledge, we wouldn’t have the support to do the work in the time that it got done here, and it would be an unsafe environment.”

“You need to dip into as many resources as possible to get projects like these done at the pace and scale that they need to be done,” added David Cowman, San Mateo RCD Project Manager.

Beyond the project’s safety and carbon sequestration benefits, treatments will also reduce threats to watershed health and aquatic habitat, increase the pace of reforestation, and establish conditions that will allow for future prescribed burns to maintain forest health. As of July 2022, treatments have been completed for more than 80 percent of the project acres. The project is expected to be completed in early 2024.



BEFORE (LEFT) AND AFTER (RIGHT) FUELS REDUCTION TREATMENTS AT WUNDERLICH COUNTY PARK.

◀ WATER EFFICIENCY IMP THE OCEAN RANCH RESTO

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