



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
FIRE DEPARTMENT

Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

2016

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Message from the Fire Chief

On October 29th, 2015, Santa Barbara awoke once more to fire in our front country mountains. The Gibraltar Fire was poised at the top of two key drainages that lead into our community. Due to a combination of factors, including an unprecedented aerial attack, a seamless automatic aid response from all local agencies and a break in the weather, it was contained early and no structures were damaged. It was key that steps for planning, improved communications and a more robust aircraft response had taken place before the fire hit.

That is the key feature and value of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District. As community partners, you have accepted the responsibility of being prepared for the inevitable wildfires that will occur in Santa Barbara. By creating defensible space, road clearance and removal of fuel from special project areas, the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District

is preparing itself for wildfire. As I have said before, this project should be evaluated for its impact over the decades rather than individual years. The metrics in terms of miles of roads cleared, tons of brush chipped and numbers of defensible space evaluations continue to be impressive.



We hope that you took time to fill out the survey from the Bren School of Environmental Science & Management.

Graduate students from UCSB are working to evaluate the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District to better understand the effectiveness of its programs. We hope to learn where we are doing well and what we need to do to make it's programs more effective. We need the input from you, our partners, to be successful.

While we still remain in High Fire Season as I write this in December, all signs point to a significant El Nino this winter. Please take steps to prepare yourselves and your property from damaging rains. Watch the City of Santa Barbara's website for information of flood preparedness.

Thanks again for your partnership in the City of Santa Barbara's Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District.

Patrick J. McElroy

What's New?

In this year's newsletter we wanted to give all residents of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District an update on some of the projects completed this last year in addition to helpful tips about how to make your home and community wildfire ready. We will also cover some of the benefits and challenges that vegetation management projects have presented, along with some

exciting news about evaluating the current and future effectiveness of the districts many programs.

As the chief mentioned, we have had not any fires this year in the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District, but we will continue to prepare for our projects and services throughout the winter months.

Make sure to check the chipping schedule for your area's start date on the next page and carefully review the chipping instructions so you don't miss us in the Spring.

We look forward to another year of working together on keeping Santa Barbara safe from the ever present threat of wildfire in our community. Please contact us if you have any questions about our programs or this newsletter.

Thank you for your continual support. Since 2006 we've:

Chipped more than 2700 tons of vegetation through our annual chipping program

Cleared 150 miles of roadways through our road clearance program

Treated 125 acres of flammable vegetation through vegetation management

Evaluated over 400 properties to assess potential defensible space improvements

2016 Defensible Space Chipping

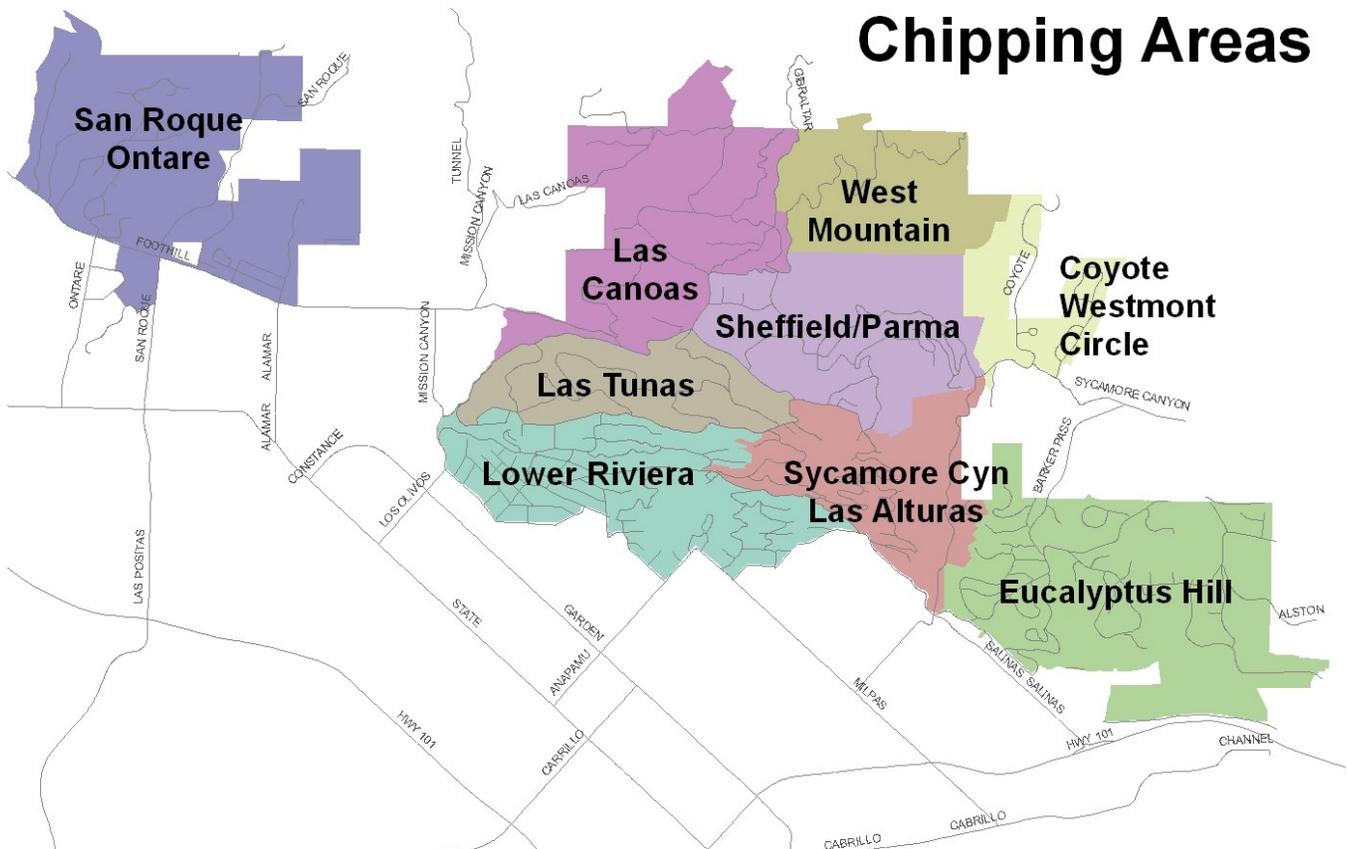
Sheffield/Parma	February 29
Las Canoas	March 14
Eucalyptus Hill	March 28
Sycamore Canyon/Las Alturas	April 11
Lower Riviera	April 25
San Roque/Ontare	May 2
Las Tunas	May 16
Coyote/Circle/Westmont	May 23
West Mountain	June 6

Properly stacked vegetation along roadway



Please put your cut vegetation out on roadways **no sooner than two weeks** and **no later than the day** your chipping area is scheduled to begin (second passes will not be made).

Please refer to the map of chip areas below. For further detail visit our website or call us at 965-5254



Chipping Instructions

Chipping services are provided to encourage property owners to create defensible space and provide a cost effective way to dispose of cut material.

As part of the City's environmental efforts, our goal is to re-use 98% of all chipped



material. To achieve this goal we need your help. If you can use chips on your property please contact us at 965-5254. A load of chips is approximately 14 cubic yards. Partial loads are not available.

The chipping instructions (below) outline the specific requirements. Vegetation that does not meet these requirements will not be chipped and will be left on site. The property owner will be responsible for the legal disposal of any material that cannot be chipped.



Chipping Instructions

- Cut vegetation should be laid out in a pile along the street outside the drivable roadway.
- The cut end of all vegetation must face the street so we can easily handle the material.
- Brush should be left in long lengths (4-7 feet). This makes it is much easier to chip.
- Cut branches should be no greater than 10 inches in diameter. Tomorrow
- Material in plastic bags will not be picked up.
- Twine or string must not be used to tie vegetation.
- Rocks or other debris will not be chipped.
- Long piles OK as long as they are not over 4 feet in height.
- Old dead vegetation that has been lying around for years will not be chipped (this type of vegetation damages chipper blades).
- Pine needles or other leaf litter cannot be chipped.
- Piles pushed or moved by mechanical means, i.e. tractor, will not be chipped.
- Grasses, palm fronds, succulents or agaves will not be chipped.

Exotic pest plants that will **NOT** be chipped include:

Arundo • All species of ivy • Castor bean • Fennel • All species of broom • Ice plant
Tobacco weed • Pampas grass • Fountain grass • Mediterranean grass • Tamarisk
Any kind of Bamboo

Defensible Space Requirements

- The City's "Defensible Space Clearance Requirements" mandate the clearance of flammable vegetation from any structure and public or private street that is on or that borders your property.
- The requirements for defensible space vary based on your wildland fire hazard zone.
- There are two fire hazard zones within the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District;
 - *Extreme Foothill Zone* - 150 feet of defensible space is required.
 - *Foothill Zone* - 100 feet of defensible space is required.
 *See our website for defined zones.

Your property is required to be in compliance with the City of Santa Barbara Municipal Code, Chapter 8.04 by June 15 of this year, and is required by law to stay in compliance year-round.

Defensible Space and Bird Nesting

Nesting and breeding birds are impacted by vegetation removal. Bird nesting season occurs between April 1st through July 30th when defensible space work is being completed. To protect nesting and breeding bird populations a qualified biologist should be contacted to evaluate potential impacts.



Defensible Space Frequently Asked Questions

What is Defensible Space?

Defensible Space is the landscaped area around your home that is maintained to reduce the fire danger to structures and your property. A good defensible space area is key in providing a buffer between an approaching wildfire and can make the difference between saving or losing your home.

Why do I need Defensible Space? Won't the Fire Department protect my home?

It is unlikely there will be enough fire fighting resources available to protect every home from an approaching wildfire. Reducing the amount of flammable vegetation around your home it will reduce the intensity of a wildfire and decrease the chances of your structure being lost.

What are good fire-resistant plants I can find in Santa Barbara?

When selecting plants within your Defensible Space area we encourage homeowners to choose fire-resistant native plant species. Visit the Firescape Garden located on Stanwood Dr. across from Fire Station 7 to see waterwise species we recommend planting in your Defensible Space area. Make sure to visit the Helpful Links page on our website and remember that all plants require maintenance.

I've noticed a lot of dead trees in my neighborhood recently. Why are they dying?

Southern California is experiencing one of the worst droughts on record which has led to an increased rate of tree mortality due to lack of water. Additionally, insects and bark beetles that feed on drought stressed trees have significantly increased tree mortality rates.

If I request a Voluntary Defensible Space Evaluation and the inspector notices that I am not in compliance will he/she start an enforcement case?

No. The intention of a Voluntary Defensible Space Evaluation is not to be utilized as an enforcement tool. It is provided strictly for education purposes with a goal of helping homeowners achieve a more fire safe community.

Voluntary Defensible Space Evaluations

The City of Santa Barbara Fire Department offers voluntary evaluations of your property to ensure that your home is protected. Our goal is to work one-on-one with residents to educate them on wildfire safety on their property. These evaluations are voluntary and are not used as an enforcement tool.

During a major wildland fire homes can be lost when fire embers find a weakness in your home through vents or unprotected openings. These embers, or “fire brands” can start small fires in crawlspaces and attics, leading to a total loss of the structure. Santa Barbara is known for its extreme fire weather and significant structure loss, as demonstrated during the Sycamore Canyon, Painted Cave, Tea, and most recently Jesusita fires. In a wind driven fire there is no guarantee that your home will survive, but our goal is to make each and every home as safe as possible. To date, we have provided more than 400 Voluntary Defensible Space Evaluations with property owners throughout the district.

What is involved in a Defensible Space Evaluation?

During a Voluntary Defensible Space Evaluation we meet on site with you and walk around your property. We will discuss your current landscaping, exterior building construction, assess its current condition for things that are beneficial as well as any additional interior improvements that can be made. We have provided a checklist, similar to what is provided to you during an evaluation, on the inside back cover. Use that as a reference guide to assist you in evaluating your own defensible space needs.



For a Voluntary Defensible Space Evaluation please call 965-5254



FIRE LOVES FUEL...

It does not care if it is natural vegetation or part of a home.

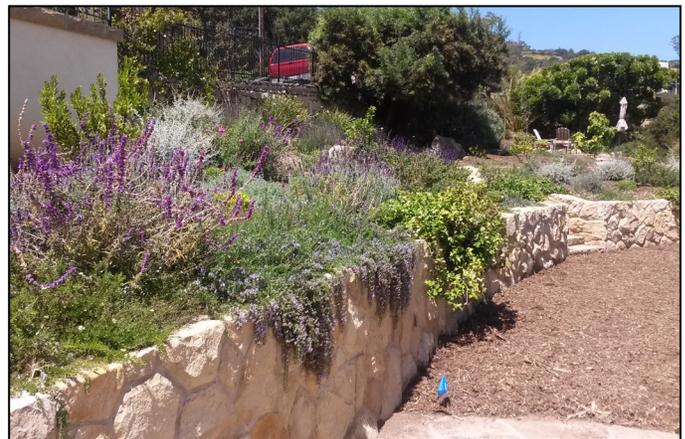
It does not care if it is yours, ours, theirs, public or private.

Homeowners • Families • Neighborhoods
Businesses • Parks • Schools
City of Santa Barbara

**Working Together for Fire Safety,
Prevention, and Preparedness**



Defensible Space Landscaping



The buffer zone you create by removing weeds, brush and other vegetation helps to keep the fire away from your home and reduces the risks from flying embers.

A balance of colorful fire resistant plants, trees, shrubs, rocks, mulch and other landscaping materials will enhance the beauty and value of any property.

Desirable Qualities for Fire Resistant Landscape Plants

- Ability to store water in leaves or stems
- Produces limited dead and fine material
- Extensive root systems for controlling erosion
- Ability to withstand drought
- Plants that are low growing in form
- Low levels of volatile oils or resins
- Ability to re-sprout after a fire
- Plant has high levels of salt or other non-resinous compounds within its tissues that can contribute to fire resistance



One of the reasons homes can be lost during wildfires is when embers generated during wildfires enter vents, crawlspaces and rain gutters. It is critical to keep all vents and openings covered by a 1/8" mesh or State Fire Marshal approved vents that prevent ember intrusion, in addition to keeping your rain gutters clear of leaf litter year-round.

Defensible Space Tips

Reduce Fire Ladders: Separate and space your plants both horizontally and vertically.

Reduce Ignition Sources: Embers may blow miles ahead of the fire. Frequently check and remove leaves and debris from roofs and gutters. Check under decks and porches, deck furniture, play/storage structures, doormats, and potted plants.

Trees: Remove branches from the ground a minimum of 6 feet or 1/3 the total height of the tree. Remove all dead branches.

Brush: Remove dead fuel and limb up 2 feet from the ground. Keep separation between shrubs, brush and trees.

Grass: Mow down to 4 inches from the ground.

Debris Piles: Do not pile wood chips or mulch on your property. Spread and maintain to a depth not exceeding 4-6 inches. Compost should be kept in an appropriate container.

Ornamental Plants: Should be irrigated, maintained and pruned year-round.

Firewood: Make sure any firewood piles are neatly stacked and more than 30ft away from any structures.

Please do not plant ornamental species known, or thought to be high hazard plants in close proximity to structures.

Examples include:

Acacia, Cedar, Cypress, Pine, Eucalyptus, Juniper, and Pampas Grass

Existing ornamental species should be properly maintained to reduce their ability to transmit fire from native growth to any structure.



Vegetation Road Clearance

Over 14 miles of vegetation road clearance completed this year!

Purpose:

- Reduce the amount of flammable vegetation along roadways
- Enhance evacuation during a wildland fire
- Allow greater access for fire engines and equipment to respond during a wildfire



Why is Road Clearance so important?

Flammable vegetation along roadways creates hazardous conditions, especially during evacuations. Burning vegetation near roads can force the closure of important evacuation routes. This can impede the ingress of first responders and the egress of residents leaving an area under evacuation. Vegetation that is not growing into roadways may still pose a threat during a wildfire if it is overgrown, unmaintained or creates fire ladders. Please contact us if you have any questions about the vegetation in front of your home and to learn about the best ways to maintain proper road clearance.





BEFORE



AFTER

Santa Barbara City Municipal Code requires homeowners to make sure that vegetation on their property does not encroach onto adjacent roadways.

This effort includes thinning vegetation along the roadways and keeping evacuation routes clear of flammable vegetation.

It is very important to maintain the work that has been completed. Keeping up our roadways is not only important for your safety and the safety of the community, it's the law.



BEFORE



AFTER



BEFORE



AFTER



If you have a road you feel needs to be addressed, please contact us for consideration.

Vegetation Management

Vegetation management is focused outside a property owners required defensible space. The 2004 City Wildland Fire Plan identified these Vegetation Management Units (project areas) within the district.

Each vegetation management project requires the Fire Department to work with individual property owners and neighborhoods to accomplish education, assist with fuel hazard reduction projects, protect natural resources unique to the area, and help outline maintenance programs. By working in cooperation with multiple property owners, there is a greater impact on reducing the community threat from wildfire.

Vegetation management focuses on the removal of flammable vegetation by preferentially removing exotic pest plants, thinning, pruning and limbing existing vegetation to remove fire ladders, limbing up of oak over story, pruning out dead material, and thinning out continuous areas of brush.

Vegetation Management Challenges

Our goal when completing vegetation management is to maximize the costs of our projects within our available budget to reduce the fire hazard and provide the greatest benefit to the community. In recent years we have encountered new challenges with our projects. Biological concerns, monitoring requirements and crew contracting costs have increased the cost per acre and decreased the ability to reduce the fire hazard. This year we will be evaluating vegetation management projects and partnering with the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management to identify opportunities on how to change these projects to better serve the Assessment District and increase community wildfire safety. Please contact us if you would like any information on completed and future Vegetation Management projects.



Before



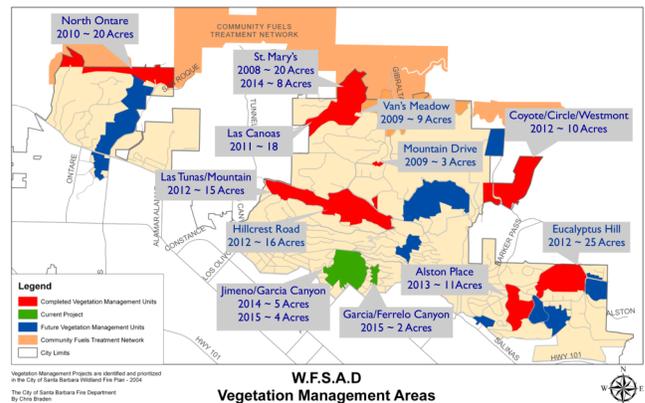
After

Since the start up of the district, project crews have been very busy strengthening these vegetation management units (project areas).

To date over 125 acres have been treated.

This map highlights:

- ◆ Completed projects (Red)
- ◆ Current projects (Green)
- ◆ Future projects (Blue)



Defensible Space Checklist

ACCESS		
YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home address visible from the street
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Home address made of fire resistive materials
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Directional signs as needed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Are directional/street signs made of fire resistant materials
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	If driveway is long, does it have suitable turnaround area
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Gates and locks operable by fire agencies
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetation cleared both horizontally 10' and vertically 13'6" from roadways on or bordering your property
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dry grasses cut to 2 inches
STRUCTURE		
YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Class A roof
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tile stoppers at ends
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spark arrestors and 1/4" mesh on chimney
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Boxed eaves and enclosed decks
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All exterior vents (attic, eave, etc.) comply with current OSFM standards
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Windows dual paned with 1 pane tempered
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Structure has noncombustible siding
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Decks and porches made of non-combustible material and free of easily combustible material (i.e. plastic furniture, seat cushions, shade umbrellas)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Remove wood piles and other combustibles at least 30' from house
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Resident has smoke detectors, fire extinguishers & evacuation plan
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Residential sprinklers in operating condition
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rain gutters and roof free of leaves, needles and branches
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trees limbed minimum 10ft from chimney
DEFENSIBLE SPACE		
YES	NO	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All flammable brush is lean, clean and green (limbed, pruned and maintained) within designated defensible space zone (30-50-70-100-150ft)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All fire ladders removed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dry grass cut to 2 inches
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shrubs trimmed up 2ft or 1/3 of height, all dead removed
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spacing between shrubs and clusters of plants
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All dead wood removed and trees limbed up 6ft above ground or as much as possible with younger trees
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trees limbed a minimum 10ft from eaves and roofline
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	All dead trees removed from property
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Separation between trees and crowns
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	LPG tank clear of combustible material 10ft in all directions

*** Items in red are required annually under Santa Barbara Municipal Code 8.04*

We're on the web....

Our website is a great place to find links to fire safe landscaping, exotic pest plants, defensible space clearance requirements, and current events. Check the web for updates on what is happening in the Wildland Fire suppression Assessment District.

www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/WFSAD



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA
FIRE DEPARTMENT

SBFD Website

www.SantaBarbaraCA.gov/fire

SBFD Facebook

www.facebook.com/

Visit our Blog!

<http://wfsad.blogspot.com/>

**Santa Barbara County
Fire History**

Year	Fire Name	Acres	Homes Lost
1955	Refugio	84,770	Several
1964	Coyote	67,000	100+
1971	Romero	14,538	4
1977	Sycamore	805	234
1977	Hondo	10,000	0
1979	Eagle Painted	4,530	5
1990	Cave	4,900	524
1993	Marre	43,864	0
2002	Sudden	7,160	0
2004	Gaviota	7,440	1
2007	Zaca	240,207	0
2008	Gap	9,445	0
2008	Tea	1,940	238
2009	Jesusita	8733	80

City of Santa Barbara
Fire Department
925 Chapala Street

Bren School Survey

Last year, graduate students from the UCSB Bren School of Environmental Science & Management sent out a survey to all residents of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District. The purpose of this survey was to assess the consequences of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District and its programs. Additionally, the survey will be used to identify opportunities for change in these services to ensure we can provide the greatest community benefit within the District's. Lastly, their findings will be used to determine the feasibility and suitability for other communities to adopt programs similar to those provided by the Assessment District.

Preliminary results have been encouraging with more than 400 surveys returned. The Bren School will continue to analyze the results of the survey over the coming months before a final report is completed later in the Spring. By identifying the optimal changes in programs and services we hope to continually improve the Assessment District in order to maximize the overall community benefit within the City. We look forward to discussing their findings and to share the results with the residents of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District.

We would like to thank those who took the time to fill out and return the survey in addition to all residents of the Assessment District for their continual support. The success of the Wildland Fire Suppression Assessment District is dependent on the work and wildfire prevention measures taken by homeowners and we look forward to another fire safe year together in 2016.

YOUR ASSESSMENT DOLLARS PROVIDE FOR:

**Vegetation Management Projects • Defensible Space Evaluations • Chipping/Brush Removal
Public Education & Outreach • Vegetation Road Clearance
Customer Service & Compliance Support • Hotline 805-564-5254**