

# County of Santa Clara

## Parks and Recreation Department

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[www.parkhere.org](http://www.parkhere.org)



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### Sanborn & Upper Stevens Creek Forest Health Plan Public Meeting

Thursday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, 6:00-7:30 pm

#### **Speakers:**

*Michael Rhoades, Natural Resources Program Manager – Santa Clara County Parks*

*Jeremy Farr, Principal Planner – Santa Clara County Parks*

*Shelan Zuhdi, Parks Natural Resources Planner – Santa Clara County Parks*

*Scott Eckardt, Project Manager – Dudek*

#### **Agenda Items**

1. Introductions of speakers and supporting agencies
2. Presentation on the Sanborn & Upper Stevens Creek Forest Plan
3. Question & Answer discussion
  1. Alice Kaufman:
  2. Can you show the timeline slide again? When will the plan be available for comment?
    - a. Shelan Zuhdi: tonight's purpose was to gain comments for further consideration, but the plan will be posted in December 2022/January 2023 to the public. It will also be posted on Cal fire's website.
  3. Jane Manning (south skyline FSC): Does the plan involve any restoration activities?
    - a. Michael Rhodes: We prefer natural restoration and regeneration as these projects will alleviate over growth, and it is the most cost effective and reliable way rather than doing active restoration including planting and arranging for irrigation. We expect this passive restoration to be successful.
  4. Ronald Orry: Who will do the work? Will there be volunteer opportunities?
    - a. Shelan Zuhdi: We have a robust volunteer program so we will look into how we can incorporate that into our plan.
    - b. Michael Rhodes: We anticipate much of the work to be done by contractors since this work needs heavy machinery that can most effectively be done through contractors. We have learned this through the Los Gatos Collective program. Our park employees are focused on their other responsibilities, so they would not have much time to do this work on top of that. As always, we want to include volunteers where we can.
  5. Kristen Lee: Does the work intend to use pesticides especially glyphosate?
    - a. Michael Rhodes: The county has had an Integrated Pest Management Plan over the past 15 years to reduce the county's use of certain herbicides including glyphosate. In order for us to be able to use glyphosate in this project we would have to demonstrate that we have no other alternatives. Midpen is more advanced on treating areas and we hope to also learn from them. We have

used herbicide in the past for example in eucalyptus, but it is used in a very controlled way for example injecting it in the stump. We will also explore the use of fire and other treatments as alternatives.

6. Jane Manning: Could you also re-show the maps and kindly fill in more detail on types of activities that will occur along the existing Fire breaks of charcoal, road and Black Road? These are included in the South Skyline Fire Safe Council area, and we have previously collaborated with the Santa Clara County Fire Safe Council on these locations. Thank you.
  - a. Michael Rhodes: Our coordination with the FSC's is essential to successfully implementing this plan as they bridge the residential communities to our park in an effective way. Our work is leveraged by their work as we get fuel work done by the FSC that is adjacent to our park land. FSC has helped secure funds in the past from Cal fire and we are very appreciative of that so we will be in touch to leverage that partnership again.
7. Kristen Lee: Des Midpen plan to pretreat with glyphosate?
  - a. Michael Rhodes: They maintain an up-to-date website where you can find more specific info about their pretreatments and their forest health actions to see if they use glyphosate. Their staff would be happy to answer your questions
  - b. Cody: we are not using glyphosate; we are doing everything with mechanical and manual removal.
8. Ronald Ori: Are you working with Castle Rock State Park?
  - a. Shelan Zuhdi: We are not currently; Michael Rhodes want to add anything?
  - b. Michael Rhodes: We did reach out to state parks so they could be aware as they are implementing similar projects however that particular unit has been busy with fire recovery, so they are a little behind us on this project. However, Skyline FSC is looking for federal grants to build off work completed by Cal trans and Cal Fire. All the agencies will be able to build highway 9 skyline corridor in order to use areas to stop an uncontrolled fire from spreading. We will look to work with them in the future.
9. Ronald Ori: What impacts will there be to park users from this plan?
  - a. Shelan Zudhi: Impacts are mainly temporary closures of certain trails and we will be properly notifying people and information will be shared prior so the public will know before heading to the parks.
  - b. Michael Rhodes: There could be very short-term campsite closures if there is work occurring with proximities with a campsite. In that case, we will plan that work to be during the slow season. We expect most of the work to be done outside of the core areas, but we will make sure to properly notify people.
10. Kristen Lee: Are you able to revisit the discussion on the extent to which the plan is focused on wildfire Prevention versus other forest health items, such as reducing competition?
  - a. Shelan Zudhi. The plan is focused on both. Treatments are focused on reducing fuel loads to reduce intensity and or frequency of fires.
  - b. ED Orre: A healthy forest is low risk forest. The proposed project would include removal of understory to benefit the forest health and reduce risk of

catastrophic wildfire. With current drought conditions. The vegetation is more stressed, so the thinning will help with those conditions. This plan also has mitigation for animals built into this plan.

11. Jane Manning: Several neighbors have noticed numerous flag trees, the long trails adjacent to Skyline Boulevard, in Sanborn park near the summit rock, parking. What do the flags indicate?
  - a. 2. Orange Flagging was put in place during the contractors pre bid for the los Gatos collaborative project to show trees that will be remain once forest health treatments were complete. The flags were used for Contractors to get a visual sense of what the work would look like. You and your neighbors will also soon see temporary signs that will explain the flagging.
12. Jane Manning: The same neighbors ask me to find out what protections will be in place to avoid impact on nesting, fledging, fledgling peregrine falcons at Summit Rock?
  - a. Shelan Zudhi: Biological resources are very important to Santa Clara County Parks. Prior to any projects, bird surveys will be conducted. This work would also include establishing buffers and avoiding work during nesting season.
  - b. Michael Rhodes: Falcons that use summit rock as an hatchery which is a very important resource so work there will be during times to not impact the falcons that return year after year.
13. Anonymous: What will the visual impact be at the Christmas Tree Farm view from black and skyline?
  - a. Michael Rhodes: It is currently used as a training ground for fire crews needing saw training that is also used to cut out nonnative Christmas trees species to maintain buffer to natives. The recommendation in the plan is that tree farm is slowly phased out. We recognize that wholesale phase out would be very costly when we can be focused instead on restoration. The Christmas tree farm's footprint will be reduced over the 20 years but visually it will not look all that different.
14. Alice Kaufman: Would it be correct to say that this plan is prioritizing road corridor? It appears that you're not at this time attempting to reduce fuel loads throughout the entire park area. Also, it looks like the primary goal is reducing wildfire risk rather than restoring the forest to old growth. Late zero characteristics.
  - a. Michael Rhodes: We talk about fuel breaks frequently but as mentioned in the presentation for the lake ranch treatment and Lyndon Canyon, the objectives there are to restore the trees where there is a variety of ages including declining trees important for habitat to mimic an undistributed condition. Lots of the treatment areas are road adjacent since lots of interior areas are subject to sudden oak death so our work there is limited. Lot of emphasis of accessible corridor treatments which benefits wildfire resiliency work but it's not the only goal of the plan.

#### 4. Wrap up

1. Tonight's presentation will be available on SCC parks website as well as the meeting notes. We appreciate everyone's input. Our website also has information on our plan.