SANTA LUCIA FUELS REDUCTION PROJECT

SUMMARY

Over a 4.5-year period, funds are being used to reduce wildfire risk on the Santa Lucia Preserve by treating fine fuels, dense monotypic invasive vegetation, and ladder fuels across grassland and oak savannah. These actions are creating landscape-scale fire resilience by slowing fire spread, reducing flame height and crown-fire behavior, and improving access for residents and firefighters during an ignition. The work is directly protecting high-risk and very-high-risk wildland–urban interface communities in and around the Carmel River watershed, where more than 11,000 homes, 19,000 residents, critical lifeline utilities, schools, communications towers, and the drinking-water supply system are vulnerable to catastrophic fire.

ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Wildfire Risk Reduction

PARTNERS

SANTA LUCIA CONSERVANCY

Santa Lucia Conservancy

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The project is reducing hazardous fuel loads at a scale that materially lowers wildfire intensity and spread potential across the preserve and adjacent wildland urban interface communities. It is restoring ecological function and fire-adapted structure in grassland and oak savannah through managed grazing and invasive control. It is eliminating ladder fuels and shrub encroachment to break vertical and horizontal fuel continuity, safeguarding evacuation and emergency access, and maintaining defensible space around critical public assets and community infrastructure. By doing so, the project is advancing a climate-adapted, repeatable wildfire-resilience strategy in one of California's highest-risk coastal watersheds.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The Conservancy is actively treating fuels through three ongoing activity streams. First, it is reducing fine fuels and dense thatch on approximately 4,000 acres of grassland and oak savannah using rotational cattle grazing, at a rate of roughly 800 acres per year. Second, it is treating approximately 675 acres of invasive stands and ladder fuels over the same period using hand removal, targeted herbicide application, and mechanical methods, averaging 135 acres per year. Third, it is treating approximately 85 acres of shrub encroachment through mechanical and hand removal, averaging 17 acres per year. Together these activities are delivering a cumulative 4,760 treated acres that reduce fire severity, increase fire-suppression success, and protect nearby communities and infrastructure from catastrophic loss.

CMSF

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NOAA

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