RESILIENT FOREST RESTORATION: PROTECTING COMMUNITIES IN WILDLAND URBAN INTERFACE

SUMMARY

The project will reduce hazardous fuel loads at Mitteldorf Preserve, a property of Big Sur Land Trust (BSLT), using low-impact forest management practices such as chipping, burn piling, lop-and-scatter, and mastication across 60 acres of old-growth redwood and transition habitat. By removing ladder fuels and dense understory, the project will lower the risk of high- severity wildfire spreading toward the nearby communities of Carmel, Carmel Valley, Pebble Beach, and Carmel Highlands. The work will also ready the site for future prescribed and potential cultural burns that can be used to maintain forest health and resilience into the future.

ADAPTATION STRATEGY

Wildfire Risk Reduction

PARTNERS

BIG SUR LAND TRUST
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PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This project will directly reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfire to protect people, infrastructure, and ecosystems in the wildland-urban interface. It will decrease wildfire severity potential by removing residual fuels and establishing defensible space around historic structures, hiking trails, and youth education areas. It will protect critical access routes to the Palo Corona - White Rock strategic community fuel break identified in the regional wildfire prevention and mitigation plan as essential for emergency response and community defense. Additionally, the project will prepare the forest for future cultural and prescribed burning by restoring conditions that support the safe reintroduction of “good fire” for long-term forest health, resilience to climate change, and reduction of post-fire debris flow risk. By safeguarding old-growth redwood stands and mixed hardwood legacy trees, the project will strengthen ecological resilience while advancing regional fire adaptation strategy.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The project is progressing through a phased approach that begins with pre-treatment planning, advances into implementation, and concludes with multi-year post-treatment monitoring and adaptive stewardship. In the first phase, BSLT is contracting with forestry and Tribal consultants, conducting National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) biological and cultural reviews, surveying sensitive resources, establishing buffer zones around legacy trees, and collecting baseline ecological and photographic data prior to treatment.

CMSF

This work is part of Climate Resilient Monterey Bay (CRMB), an initiative through the California Marine Sanctuary Foundation. CRMB is Federally funded as part of the Climate Resilience Regional Challenge through the Inflation Reduction Act and administered by the Office for Coastal Management, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

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In the implementation phase, crews will treat diseased tanoak and dense understory vegetation, remove ladder fuels near legacy trees, improve defensible space, and apply low-impact forestry techniques to reduce fuel continuity. In the final phase, the team will conduct post-treatment photo-monitoring, tracking changes in forest structure and species composition, removing invasive plants if detected, and performing early-detection rapid-response monitoring to ensure treatment effectiveness. Forest prescriptions and progress are being developed by a Registered Professional Forester in consultation with Tribal partners and BSLT staff to ensure work remains aligned with fire-risk reduction, ecological outcomes, and preparation for future cultural and prescribed burns.

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