

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan



The Circle Oaks Homes Association

Original: 05/01/2009

Updated: 01/02/2013

Prepared by:

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Homes Association

Original: 05/01/2009

Updated: 01/02/2013

Executive Summary:

Circle Oaks is a subdivision located in the wildland urban interface. The community is approximately 8 miles east of the Silverado Trail, on the east side of the Atlas Peak range. The rolling land area is surrounded by ranches and vineyards intermixed with brush fields, oak woodlands, and coniferous forests. The houses and roads within the subdivision are built upon moderate terrain, but are often above or below steeper slopes. The aspect is generally northeasterly, and Capell Creek provides part of the northern boundary.

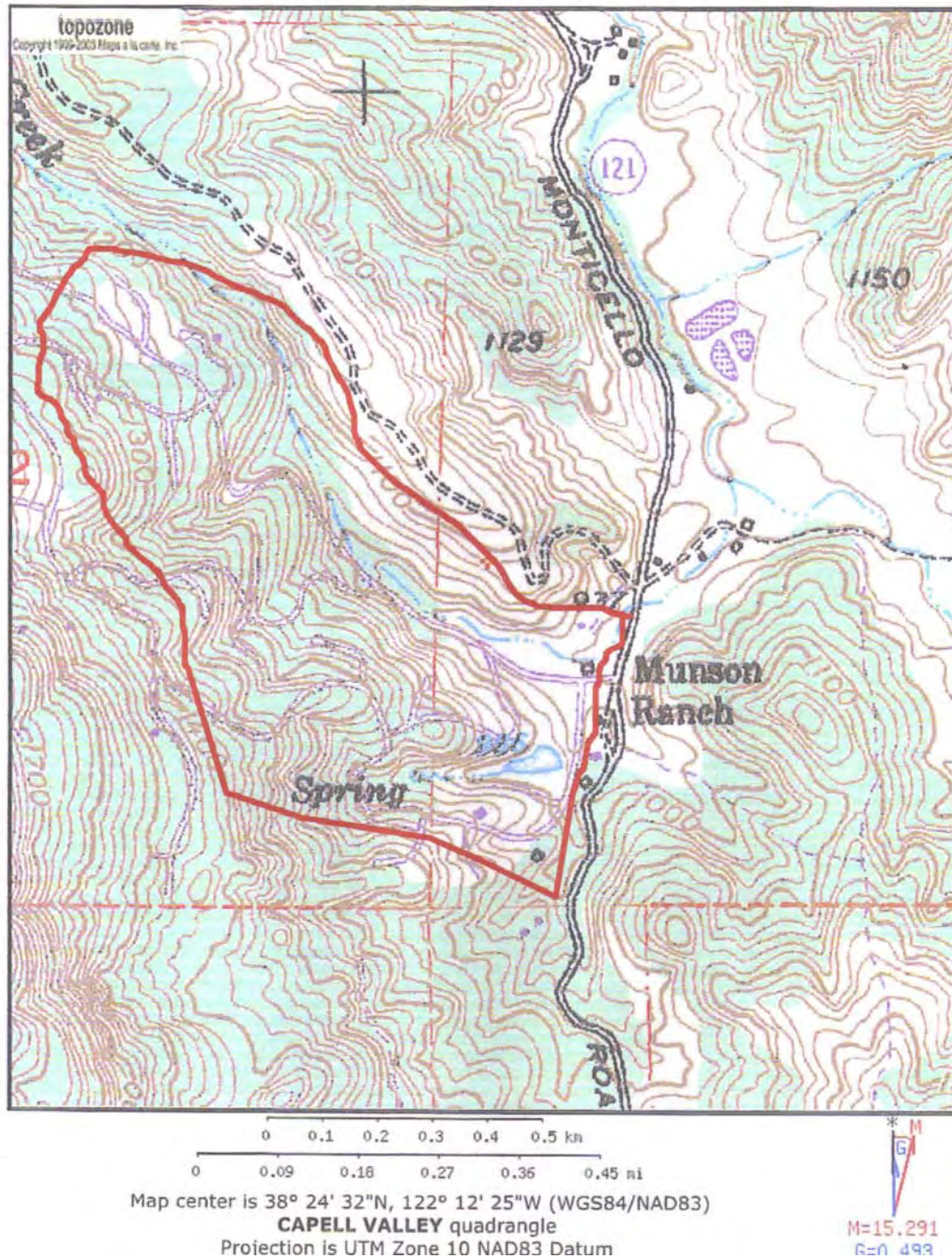
The subdivision is unique in that the parcels are circular in shape with 115' diameter, each parcel is approximately ¼-acre in size. Currently there are 185 houses built on the 339 available parcels. 750 people reside in the existing structures. The parcels have all been sold and absentee ownership is common on the vacant parcels, with perhaps 30 parcels owned by out-of-state persons. The 220-acre subdivision has about 130 acres of open space land, owned and managed by the Circle Oaks Homes Association (COHA). See Map 1 for geographical location and Map 2 for the configuration of the parcels and open space.

The area around Circle Oaks has had an active fire history, which brings focus to this plan, devoted to protection from a destructive wildfire. It is understood that not all fires can be prevented, but appropriate vegetation management will allow a wildfire to pass through the area without home or structural loss.

MAP 1 Geographic Location - The Circle Oaks Community

TopoZone - The Web's Topographic Map

<http://www.topozone.com/print.asp?z=10&n=4251481.39329>



Map 2. Circle Oaks Community Parcels.

Map 2 - The Circle Oaks Community Approximately 220 Acres
Circles are lots, intervening space is greenbelt

Cal Rte. 121



History:

Circle Oaks has been involved in fire safety programs for a decade, although most of these years preceded the formalization of the current “Community Wildfire Protection Planning(CWPP)” format. The Circle Oaks community is included in the latest Napa County CWPP, dated April, 2005.

The original planning and active projects began in 2000, after the Board of Directors of the homeowners association declared a “fire emergency” and sought help from CAL FIRE. They also mandated a major increase in owners’ annual assessment, to raise funds for the work. Through the present day on average, 50% of the homeowners association annual funds are spent on fire safety projects, these expenditures are summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Community fire safety expenditures and grant funding.

| Year | Expenditure | Grant Received | Grant From | Cash and In-Kind Contribution |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 2000 | \$515 | None | | \$515 |
| 2001 | \$50,934 | None | | \$50,934 |
| 2002 | \$25,061 | \$50,000 | BLM | \$50,000 |
| 2003 | \$97,201 | \$50,000 | BLM | \$50,000 |
| 2004 | \$66,449 | \$50,000 | BLM | \$50,000 |
| 2005 | \$78,622 | \$25,000 | BLM | \$35,000 |
| 2006 | \$62,925 | None | | \$44,000 |
| 2007 | \$83,315 | \$45,000 | BLM | \$45,000 |
| 2008 | \$41,008 | None | | \$45,000 |
| 2009 | \$44,174 | \$75,000 | USFS | \$59,500 |
| 2010 | \$110,862 | None | | \$19,100 |
| 2011 | \$22,245 | None | | \$67,390 |
| 2012 | \$44,650 | None | | \$67,300 |
| 2013 | \$55,150 | \$6000 | NCFF | \$77,800 |

The base plan was completed in 2000 with the help of CAL FIRE and an outside defensible space consultant. Shortly after this beginning, the community began to apply for and receive fire grant funding. As a part of the application process, a full scale California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and Archeological study were done. A major plan update was performed in 2003.

The community has had a fire safety committee which reports to the board of directors, since 2003. Early each year, the committee meets to review the existing plan as well as to perform a complete walk-thru of the community and then develops the work plan for the coming year. CAL FIRE is invited and meets with the committee to review the year’s plan, walk the ground, and make any suggestions & comments.

In 2008, these fire safety efforts resulted in Circle Oaks receiving recognition from the National Firewise USA program as the first Fire Wise Community in Napa County, and one of only eleven in the State of California. In 2012, Circle Oaks celebrated five years as a National Firewise Community.

The community received funding from the Napa Communities Firewise Foundation to pay for a new Vegetation Management Plan which was performed by a defensible space expert, who is also a certified forester (“Fire Smart Defensible Space, Inc.”). The assessment and its recommendations have been embraced in this new CWPP, and a copy of the study is appended to this document.

Involving Decision Makers:

As noted above, the Circle Oaks Community has had involvement with Napa County fire services, CAL FIRE, and the National Firewise USA Communities. The current officials involved in reviewing, commenting and approving this updated (2012) CWPP are:

- Local Government: Mr. Bill Dodd, Supervisor, Napa County District 4
- Local Fire Battalion Chief: Geoff Belyea
- Napa County Fire Department (CAL FIRE) Chief: Scott Upton.
- The Board of Directors of the Circle Oaks Homes Association:
 - Katie Maxim, President
 - Brian Witbracht, Vice President
 - Nancy Lewis-Heliotes, Secretary & Treasurer
 - Scott St. Aubin, Director
 - Mark Hay, Director
- The Manager, of the Circle Oaks Homes Association and chair of the Fire Safety Committee: Stephen Gort
- The President, of the Circle Oaks County Water District: Mary Holder
- The Circle Oaks Fire Safety Committee:
 - Jon Soper
 - Thomas Sedlack
 - Stephen Gort

Federal Agencies:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was involved with Circle Oaks in reviewing and approving plans and awarding Fire Grants in: 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007. The US Forest Service reviewed and approved plans and awarded a Fire Grant in 2009. See Table 1 above.

State/Local Agencies

With jurisdiction in the area of Circle Oaks are:

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| • Napa County Fire Department (CAL FIRE) | Chief Scott Upton |
| • CAL FIRE, Napa County Battalion 1415 | Chief Geoff Belyea |
| • Napa County Supervisor – District 4 | Mr. Bill Dodd |

Interested Parties:

- The residents of the Circle Oaks Community
- The Circle Oaks County Water District
- The Napa Communities Firewise Foundation

Map 3. Community Map with areas of interest/concern:

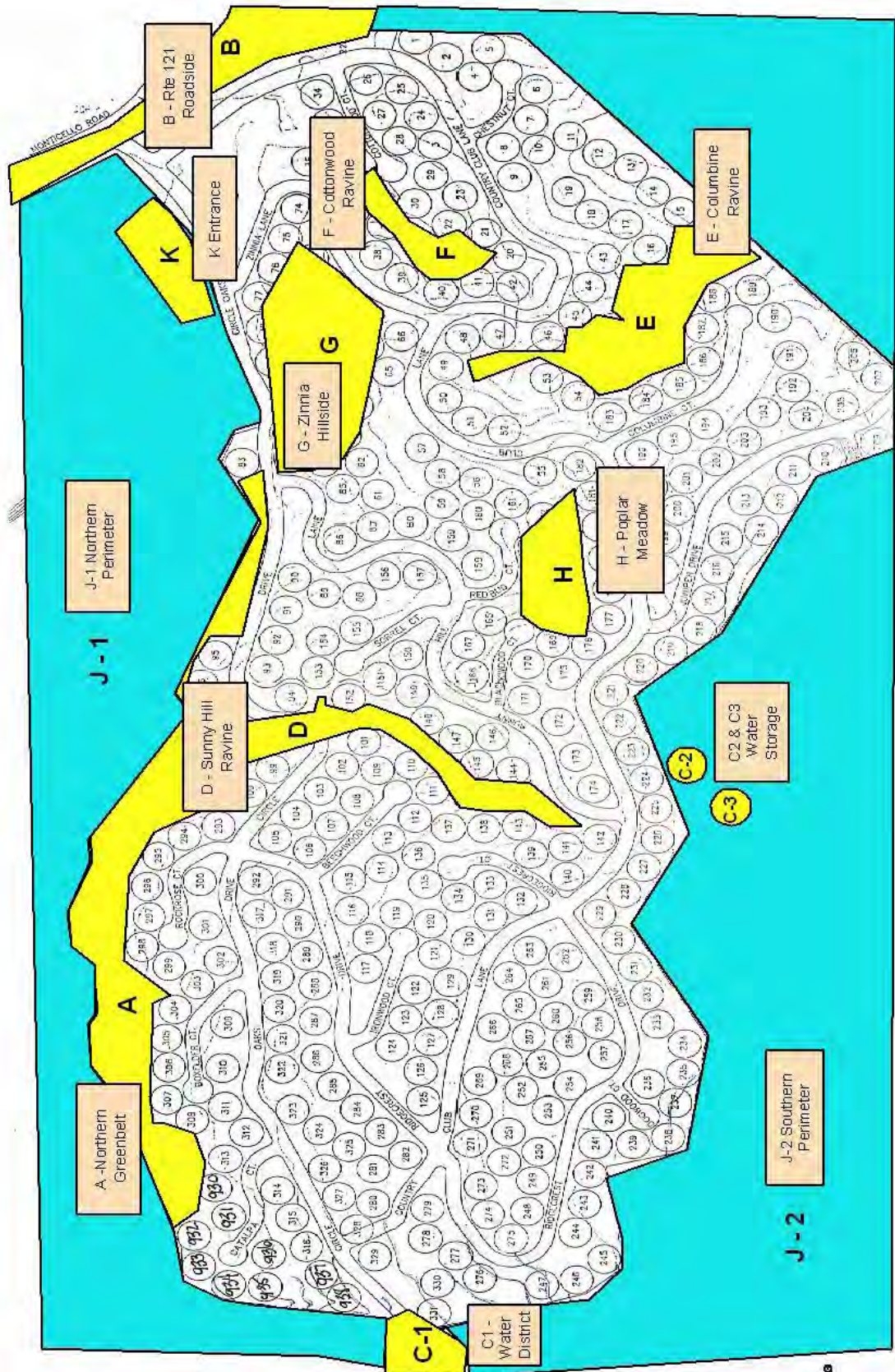


Table 2. Areas of Concern Legend for Map 3:

| Legend | Name | Concern |
|-----------|---------------------|--|
| A | Northern Greenbelt | Undeveloped, unpopulated woodland |
| B | Rte 121 Roadside | Major external roadway, roadside fire potential. |
| C-1 | Water District | Municipal Water supply |
| C-2 & C-3 | Water Storage | Municipal Water Supply |
| D | Sunny Hill Ravine | Steep Ravine |
| E | Columbine Ravine | Steep Ravine |
| F | Cottonwood Ravine | Steep Ravine |
| G | Zinnia Hillside | Steep hillside close to B |
| H | Poplar Meadow | Hillside grassy meadow |
| J-1, J-2 | Community Perimeter | Majority owned by a vineyard. |
| K | COHA Entrance | Roadside fire potential. |

- The inhabited areas (in white on the map) are at potential risk to wildland fire.
- A critical human infrastructure, the Circle Oaks County Water District municipal water supply is noted as C-1, C-2, and C-3 on the map. This is for both consumption and fire fighting.

After considering the location of the inhabited areas, the critical human infrastructure, and the risk of wildfire, the fire safety team has identified on the map, a wildland-urban interface (WUI) zone around the community assets, which in general includes the area marked as areas J-1 and J-2.

Table 3. Community Risk Assessment:

As designated on the base map, the following table lists the associated wildfire risk.

| Risk Area | Priority | Fuel Hazard | Risk of Wildfire Occurrence | Firefighting capability | Overall Risk |
|-----------|----------|-------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| A | 1 | High | High | Difficult access | High |
| B | 4 | High | High | Good Access | High |
| C-1 | 3 | High | Med | Good dirt road access | Med High |
| C-2 & C-3 | 3 | High | Med | Poor dirt road access | Med High |
| D | 5 | Med | Med | Difficult access | Med High (Maintained) |
| E | 5 | Med | Med | Difficult access | Med High (Maintained) |
| F | 5 | Med | Med | Difficult access | Med High (Maintained) |
| G | 6 | Med | Med | Good Access | Med (Maintained) |
| H | 6 | Med | Med | Good Access | Med |
| J-1 | 2 | High | High | Difficult access | High (area not maintained) |
| J-2 | 3 | High | High | Difficult access | High (area not Maintained) |
| K | 4 | Med | Med | Good Access | Med |

J-1 & J-2 – Shaded fuel break perimeter began in Fall 2009, was completed Fall 2010.

Community reduction priorities and treatments

Based on the community risk assessment, priority ratings were assigned to the areas of community importance. The community recommendations for the type and method of treatment for the surrounding vegetation are listed in the following table.

Table 4. Project work areas in priority sequence (Highest first).

| Risk Area | Type of Treatment | Method of Treatment | Overall Priority |
|---------------------------------|--|---|------------------|
| A Northern Greenbelt | Hand crew labor | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning. | 1 |
| D Sunny Hill Ravine | Hand Crew labor, special care to avoid erosion problems, no goats. | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning | 1 |
| J –1 North Perimeter | Hand Crew labor and/or Goats | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning, or grazing | 2 |
| C-1, C-2, C-3 Water District | Hand Crew labor and/or Goats | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning, or grazing | 3 |
| J – 2 South Perimeter | Hand Crew labor and/or Goats | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning, or grazing | 3 |
| B Rte 121 Roadside | Hand Crew labor and/or Goats | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning, or grazing | 4 |
| K COHA Entrance | Hand Crew labor | Pyrophytic species removal brush clearing, weed whacking, or grazing | 4 |
| F Cottonwood Ravine | Hand Crew labor, special care to avoid erosion problems, no goats. | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning | 5 |
| E Columbine Ravine | Hand Crew labor, special care to avoid erosion problems, no goats. | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning | 5 |
| G Zinnia Hillside | Hand Crew labor, special care to avoid erosion problems, no goats. | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning | 6 |
| H Poplar Meadow | Hand Crew labor and/or Goats | Pyrophytic species removal and crown thinning, limbing up, brush clearing, slash pile burning, or grazing | 6 |

Defensible Space - Residential Properties.

For the past several years the resident homeowners in Circle Oaks have benefitted from the curbside chipping program provided by the Napa Communities Firewise Foundation(NCFF). People working to remove brush, dead trees, and limbing-up trees on their property, bring the waste to the curbside. Using a web site or telephone, they schedule the chipper. The piles are regularly treated in about 10 days. The community will continue to use this service as a part of its fire safety planning and activities.

It should be noted that this is only one of many programs which residents use. The community has historically recorded service-in-kind work effort in the range of \$15,000-\$22,000 a year prior to the implementation of the NCFF Chipping program.

Additional Concerns. Prompted by the Vegetation Management study are:

1. Engage in practices that promote a healthy Oak Forest.

The area surrounding Circle Oaks is an oak woodland. This forest type has grown in this area for millennia. Fires have often burned through this vegetation type, yet the forest persists. It is this persistence that directs us to emulate some features of the oak woodland in managing the landscape.

An oak woodland will not stay an oak woodland if nature takes its full course. Nature is dynamic. All forests pass through a succession of stages until the site is captured by a final dominant species, called the climax vegetation. As an example of this process, stages of growth in the Circle Oaks area allow grey pine to become the climax species by overtopping the oak trees, ultimately killing them. Pine will not persist forever, however, as pines are highly flammable and their abundance normally results in a hot fire (a stand-replacing fire) which kills all vegetation and replaces the forest with bare burned ground.

2. Reduce and remove pyrophytes, and non-native species.

It is a goal of this plan to enhance the oak woodland largely through a reduction of the flammable components. A second important goal is to cause flammable non-native vegetation to be removed. The desired future condition for Circle Oaks is an oak woodland with large scattered trees providing abundant shade, but with an understory that is open which will not easily ignite the overstory.

3. Emphasize & improve defensible space.

Assuring 100' defensible space around all structures reduces the threat of direct flame impingement and ignition of structures from radiation. Every year we conduct individual property lot inspections with home owners, and advise them of needed work. We will continue to perform this essential service.

4. Heightened emphasis of maintenance of vacant lot properties.

Aggressively pursue absent vacant lot owners to perform needed maintenance of their property. Work closely with CAL FIRE which is enforcing the new Napa County Fire Hazard Abatement Ordinance, which now also includes vacant lands. The ordinance includes inspections, citing offenses, possible fines, and using vendors to do work – billing the property owner if delinquent.

5. Recognize the need and plan for maintenance – forever.

As the years go by and major work is completed, be certain to budget for and manage vegetation re-growth as an “always with us” task.

6. Provide information and guidance on structure ignitability.

Inform residents as well as potential developers of vacant land of the latest low-ignition building requirements in the Stat. Done through the 2009 Annual Spring Newsletter, as well as by inclusion in the **“Circle Oaks Homes Association Architectural Regulations”**.

7. Maintaining Knox Box & Entrance Hydrant. Clearing all surrounding vegetation. The box is for first responders, with maps which include streets, gates, hydrants, etc. Ongoing.

8. Installing Hydrant markers. Blue reflective “cat’s eyes” road markers for hydrant locations.
Done - installed Summer, 2012.

9. Roadside, Right-of-way care. Napa County Public Works provides mowing along the Circle Oaks roadsides. With the aid of NCFE grant money, the community will also hire vendors to extend the treated border an additional 10-15 feet.

10. Address Markers. Develop & implement a program to upgrade address markers throughout the community. Conform to county standard size & reflectivity.

Table 5: Action Plan in Date Sequence.

| Risk Area | Landowner | Funding | Planned | Done | Next Check |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| A Greenbelt | COHA | COHA Funds | 2009 | 2009 | 2013 |
| J -1 Northern | Hall Wines | NCFF - Delta | 2009 | 2009 | 2014 |
| C-1, C-2, C-3 Water District | COHA & Water District | COHA Funds | 2009 | 2009 | 2013(?) |
| J-2 Southern | Hall Wines & Water District | NCFF - Delta | 2009 | 2010 | 2014 |
| F- Cottonwood | COHA | COHA Funds & Grant | 2009 | 2012 | 2014 |
| Pyros & non-native species | COHA & Owners | COHA Funds & Grant | 2009 | 2009 | Ongoing |
| Healthy Oak Forest. | COHA | COHA Funds & Chipping | Ongoing | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Defensible space. | Owners | COHA Funds & Chipping | Ongoing | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Maintenance of vacant lots | Owners | Property Owners | Ongoing | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Knox Box & Hydrant | COHA | COHA Funds | Ongoing | Ongoing | Ongoing |
| Hydrant Markers | COHA | COHA Funds | Summer 2009 | Summer 2012 | DONE |
| B – Route 121 | COHA & Caltrans | COHA Funds & Chipping | Fall 2009 | Fall 2010 | Annual |
| D- Sunny Hill | COHA | COHA Funds & Chipping | Spring 2010 | Not Needed | 2013 |
| E - Columbine | COHA | COHA Funds & Chipping | Spring 2010 | Spring 2011 | Annual |
| G - Zinnia | COHA | COHA Funds & Chipping | Fall 2010 | Fall 2011 | Annual |
| H - Poplar | COHA | COHA Funds & Chipping | Fall 2010 | Not Needed | 2013(?) |
| K - Entrance | COHA | COHA Funds & Chipping | Annual | 2012 | Annual |

COHA = Circle Oaks Homes Association
 NCFF = Napa Communities Firewise Foundation

It should be noted that this timetable considers both the priority of the area as well as the date of last treatment. Therefore, the highest priority area may not be the earliest date if it has been treated recently.

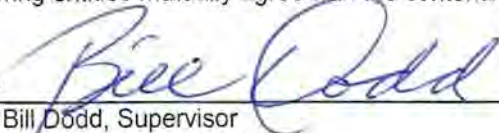
The community assesses its progress annually and makes necessary additions and/or adjustments to the work as planned.

A complete copy of the COHA Vegetation Management Plan which was compiled by “Fire Smart Defensible Space, Inc.” is attached as an appendix to this plan.

The Circle Oaks Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

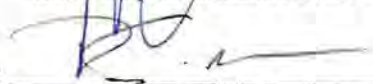
- Was collaboratively developed. Interested parties and CAL FIRE have been consulted.
- It identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment that will protect Circle Oaks.

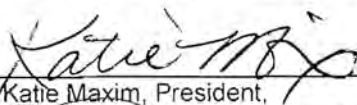
The following entities mutually agree with the contents of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

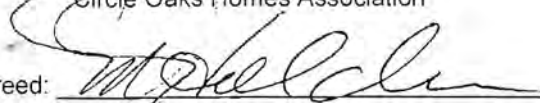
Agreed:  Date: 2/14/13
Bill Dodd, Supervisor
Napa County District 4

Agreed:  Date: 1-22-13
Scott Upton, Chief
Napa County Fire Department

Agreed:  Date: 1/31/13
Geoff Belvea, Battalion Chief 1415

Agreed:  Date: 1/17/13
Peter Munoa, Napa County Fire Marshal

Agreed:  Date: 1-15-13
Katie Maxim, President,
Circle Oaks Homes Association

Agreed:  Date: 1-10-13
Mary Holder, President,
The Circle Oaks County Water District