



Ellwood Mesa Habitat Project Frequently Asked Questions:

I see what appears to be new growth on the trees. Are they healthy?

What you're seeing is called epicormic growth. It is a plant's response to damage or stress. It is the growth of new shoots from epicormic buds that lie dormant beneath the bark. This growth is normally suppressed by hormones from active shoots higher up the tree, but when there is trauma from factors like insect attack, drought or fire these buds are activated. Plants which respond in this way are often referred to as resprouters.

Some of the most successful resprouters in the world are eucalypts (Clarke et al. 2013). Eucalypts have extensive epicormic buds that are highly protected, often by bark. This allows eucalypts greater insulation from the intense heat of fires than other tree species.

Does epicormic growth mean that a tree is dead or dying?

The presence of epicormic growth does not mean that the tree is dead or dying. It indicates that the tree has been damaged and is attempting recovery. However, there are a number of factors which may determine whether its recovery is successful or not:

- Severe fires may reduce a tree's chance of survival – this is further reduced if the tree is older or less healthy, and
- Continued stress after fire, from factors such as drought, insect damage, repeat fires or pathogens, may also reduce a tree's chance of survival.

Does epicormic growth increase the risk of tree and branch falling?

Compared with the deeper attachment characteristics of branches that form during the tree's growth epicormic branches form relatively weak unions with the trunk or other branches – they have shallower attachments.

In certain circumstances, epicormic growth may increase the risk of branches falling on that tree. In particular, when epicormic branches grow quickly and become too heavy for the trunk to support them, they may fall. This is more likely if:

- The union between the epicormic branch and the trunk or branch is cracked, cankered or decayed, or
- The trunk below the epicormic branch is decayed.

This might also result in tree fall, if the load exceeds the tree's mechanical strength. Windy conditions may precipitate any of these situations.

Are there restrictions on when the tree removal and trimming can occur?

Yes. Nesting season for certain bird species begins in October and removal activity will be restricted near active nests. Tree removal activities cannot be done during the monarch overwintering season which runs from November through February.

Is it safe for me to walk on the trails on Ellwood Mesa?

The bluff trails located away from the eucalyptus groves are safe and will remain open to the public. A map of closed trails will be posted on the City's website. Once they are safe for the public, they will be reopened.

What areas will be closed?

The City will prioritize removal of dead trees closest to public trails. The trails will be closed until tree removal and trimming can be completed and those areas are deemed safe by the City arborist and the City's insurance provider.

When will trees be trimmed and cut down?

The tree trimming and removal will begin after the bird nesting season has ended, and will conclude by September 30 to not interfere with butterfly migration season. The priority will be given to the areas with the highest public traffic. All tree work will be overseen by biological monitors and other regulatory agency representatives to insure compliance with state and federal regulations.

What will happen to the removed trees?

Trees will be removed from the Ellwood Mesa to reduce the threat of pest infestation to the remaining healthy trees. The wood from these trees may be used as firewood or be chipped.

What role does the Coastal Commission play in the short-term plan? What role does the Coastal Commission play in the long-term restoration?

The City has been coordinating with the Coastal Commission staff during the preparation of the Draft Monarch Butterfly Inventory and Habitat Management Plan. They are aware of changed conditions in the eucalyptus forest. Staff will continue to coordinate with the Coastal Commission during this process.

What is the process for restoration?

The removal of the eucalyptus trees provides an opportunity for the community to provide input on the plan for restoration of the Ellwood Mesa. The existing eucalyptus forest, is non-native, lacks diversity, and is considered a monoculture that has crowded out other species. During the restoration planning process, the public will have the opportunity to give extensive input. The City will also be coordinating with the Coastal Commission and Fish and Wildlife.

Will the butterfly grove be open for field trips this season?

This is still unknown. Access will likely be limited depending on progress of tree removal. Once tree removal is complete and butterfly overwintering areas are stable and deemed safe for the public, the plan is to reopen them to the public. Updates will be posted at <http://tinyurl.com/goletaellwoodmesa> and www.GoletaButterflyGrove.com.

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