

ELLWOOD MESA TREE REMOVAL OPTIONS: PROS AND CONS

Option 1: Remove trees rated as 0 or 1 in the near-term (starting as soon as possible and continue removal efforts over the next year). Habitat Management Plan and restoration to follow.

Pros:

- Protects remaining existing butterfly and wildlife habitat from further degradation.
- Reduces risks and impacts on healthy trees (spread of pests/insects, fire, falling trees and limbs).
- Increases the potential for young trees to grow and for some re-growth in tree removal areas.
- Removes the immediate risk to the public of falling trees.
- Expedites the re-opening of closed trails. Maximizes public access. Trails to be opened as soon as the immediate danger is eliminated.
- No fencing or daily monitoring of signage necessary.
- Hazard removal allows City and law enforcement to safely patrol grove for homeless encampments.
- Reduces fire risk due to fuel reduction.
- Lower unit cost per tree expected with immediate removal of larger number of all dead/dying trees.
- Expedites hazard removal and start of restoration.

Cons:

- Quick implementation period means limited review and public input.
- No comprehensive environmental review of tree removal and habitat restoration together at the outset.
- Will impact visitors to the aggregate locations for the 2017/18 Butterfly Season.

Option 2: Targeted Care. Same as Option 1, but retain 26 select trees with significant habitat value to key aggregation sites.

Pros:

- May provide some additional protection to remaining existing butterfly habitat.
- Reduced risks and impacts on healthy trees (spread of pests/insects, fire, falling trees and limbs).
- Potential for young trees to grow and for stump sprouting/re-growth sooner than with other options.
- Remove the immediate risk to the public of falling trees.
- Maximizes public access. Trails to be opened as soon as the immediate danger is eliminated.
- No fencing necessary.
- Hazard removal allows City and law enforcement to safely patrol grove for homeless encampments.
- Fire risk decreased due to the reduction in fuels.
- Lower cost per tree expected with immediate removal of most dead/dying trees.
- Hazard addressed with restoration to follow.

Cons:

- Quick implementation period means limited review and public input.
- No comprehensive environmental review of tree removal and habitat restoration together at the outset.
- Will impact visitors to the aggregate locations for the 2017/18 Butterfly Season.
- More expensive than Option 1 with the targeted care for the 26 trees under the arborist care. Potential for significant additional costs related to second contractor mobilization to remove the 26 trees at a later date.

Option 3: Phased-tree removal starting with one canopy this year. Habitat Management Plan to follow.

Pros:

- Smaller initial tree removal area provides an opportunity to observe results and apply these to future removals.
- Council approval for each future project.
- Opportunity for additional public input.
- Comprehensive environmental review of majority of tree removal and habitat restoration at the outset.
- Allows the City to patrol portions of the grove where dead/dying trees are removed for homeless encampments.
- Lower initial project cost, but higher long-term costs.

Cons:

- Will impact visitors to the aggregation locations for the 2017/18 Butterfly Season and future seasons by limiting public access until the dead and dying trees in those areas are removed.
- Public access may be restricted for up to 5 years.
- Potential for more extensive damage to and/or loss of butterfly habitat, if dead and dying trees not removed soon.
- Loss of healthy trees from spread of pests and dead trees falling on healthy ones.
- Further tree decline from poor health.
- Fencing around certain groves will be necessary.
- Greater fire risk due to continued build-up of dry fuels and delay in removing dead/dying trees.
- Expected higher per-tree removal cost and therefore greater overall cost.
- Hazard largely not addressed; restoration deferred except for in removal area.
- City staff will not be able to safely patrol closed areas for homeless encampments.

Option 4: Removal of Trees Rated "0" Only

Pros:

- All trees rated 0 would be removed over the next 1-2 years, beginning immediately.
- Some growth of localized areas following removal of dead trees.
- Partial public access would be restored within 3-4 months.

Cons:

- Potential loss of healthy trees from spread of pests and dead trees falling on healthy ones.
- Full public access would be delayed indefinitely due to danger posted by remaining 1-rated trees.
- Presence of dying (1-rated) trees inhibits growth in other areas.
- City staff will not be able to safely patrol for homeless encampments.
- Increased fire risk due to build-up of dry fuels and failure to remove dying trees.
- Significant cost to fence around groves.
- Hazard largely not addressed; restoration deferred.
- Higher overall cost of tree removal.

Option 5: Removal After Habitat Management Plan Approval

Pros:

- Comprehensive plan development and environmental review.
- Opportunity for extensive public input.

Cons:

- Potential for more extensive damage to and/or loss of butterfly habitat, if dead and dying trees not removed soon.
- Potential loss of healthy trees from spread of pests and dead trees falling on healthy ones.
- Limited growth and regeneration due to fallen debris and shading.
- Full public access would be delayed up to 10 years due to danger posed by 0 and 1-rated trees.
- Increased fire risk due to build-up of dry fuels and failure to remove dead/dying trees.
- Expected higher per-tree removal cost and therefore greater overall cost.

**This information represents a simplified version of information provided in the September 5th staff report presented to Council.*

Option 6: (Variation of Option 3) Removal of dangerous trees along specific public trails.

Pros:

- Smaller initial tree removal area provides an opportunity to observe results and apply these to future removals.
- Council approval for each future project.
- Opportunity for additional public input.
- Comprehensive environmental review of majority of tree removal and habitat restoration at the outset.
- Allows the City to patrol portions of the trail segments where dead/dying trees are removed for homeless encampments.
- Lower initial project cost, but higher long-term costs.
- Assures coastal access across Ellwood Mesa from all adjacent residential areas.

Cons:

- Potential for more extensive damage to and/or loss of butterfly habitat, if dead and dying trees not removed soon.
- Potential loss of healthy trees from spread of pests and dead trees falling on healthy ones.
- Limited growth and regeneration due to fallen debris and shading.
- Full public access to the eucalyptus groves and butterfly aggregation sites would be delayed for an unknown period due to danger posed by 0 and 1-rated trees.
- Increased fire risk due to build-up of dry fuels.
- Expected higher per-tree removal cost and therefore greater overall cost.