

Community Wildfire Protection Plan and Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan

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Questions and Comments

“We need to be proactive now to protect what we have for the future” – Bill Millar

Wildfire Plan:

What does “treatment” mean?

A treatment is a way to manipulate or adjust vegetation in order to reduce the threat of fire hazards. Treatments include tree thinning, limbing (removing low-level branches) and spacing.

What does the Wildfire Plan address?

The City already has an Open Space Management Plan. Now we’re looking at protecting resources, including the butterfly population, wildlife, humans and structures from wildfire. Eventually we will look at specific areas.

Was the urban forest taken into account when creating the Community Wildfire Protection Plan?

Yes. The consultants reviewed a copy of the Urban Forest Management Plan, and visited City-managed parks and open space with Bill Millar, the City’s manager of parks and open space. In terms of fuel treatment, many hazardous trees are now debris, and the remaining urban forest trees are generally in good health and only require trimming.

Does the plan include ways to remove unhealthy and hazardous trees in the Ellwood grove and replace them with healthy trees?

The plan is for the City as a whole, and does not include site-specific recommendations such as removal of specific trees.

What are the implications of the Ellwood grove’s proximity to the adjacent houses?

In terms of fire hazard mitigation, the first 30 feet from the structure’s foundation is considered an intensive management area. From there, the danger posed by a fire hazard decreases as its distance from the structure increases. The majority of the trees in the Ellwood grove are far beyond 30 feet from the adjacent houses.

What about urban forest trees located next to houses?

The urban forest trees, including individual trees close to houses, aren’t very hazardous in terms of wildfire. Even running crown fires (where fire jumps from treetop to treetop) are not primary threats to homes; understory and ground fires are a greater threat.

What role does the monarch population have in the fire plan?

The fire plan includes protections for the butterfly habitat, which was treated much like a community in the creation of the plan.

How will the plan be implemented?

Management implementation will begin with the highest priority areas, and continue in order of wildfire risk. Also, the City has ongoing tree and vegetation management, which includes treating overgrown vegetation on Ellwood Mesa, and removing downed trees that are blocking paths.

Butterfly Plan:

Is it possible to replace the unhealthy and dying trees with less hazardous tree species, or relocating trees that are currently in close proximity to the adjacent neighborhood?

While some arborists recommend adding native plants and/or other tree species, diversifying the forest is difficult due to the size of the trees, the fact that they're evergreen, and their current status as a monarch overwintering habitat. The same applies to shifting the location of trees.

Will removing perimeter trees harm the health of the grove?

Windrow trees are an important part of the Ellwood Complex, and are identified in the Habitat Assessment. The role of these trees is one element that will be assessed in the plan.

The site as a whole contributes to the monarch habitat. Could one change, such as the removal of trees on the edge of the grove have a negative effect on the entire grove, such as exposing previously protected trees to wind?

Change is always happening in the grove, such as trees dying and falling. Certain management methods are unlikely to have a dramatic negative impact on the grove.

Does the Habitat Plan address flooding and overgrowth around Deveroux Creek? What about sick and dying trees – or even healthy trees – that fall due to ground over-saturation from flooding? This exposes inner trees to wind, and is a concern to the overall health of the grove.

The monarch and fire plans include clearing the debris that contributes to flooding in Deveroux Creek.

How will you manage pests that are a threat to the grove trees?

Falling trees can knock down other trees and potentially eliminate entire monarch habitats, so it is important to protect trees from pest damage. Lerp damage includes resultant fungus that can kill trees. UCSB has a program to limit the lerp population, which is now under control. The longhorn beetle population is controlled by a natural predator. Debris provides a habitat for eucalyptus beetles, so the population will be effected by removing that debris.

What about other wildlife species in Ellwood?

The results of a complimentary study on other Ellwood wildlife – including adjacent habitats and historic habitat locations – will be taken into consideration in the Monarch Habitat Management Plan.

Were abiotic measurements taken for the creation of the Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan?

The consultant examined historical temperature and humidity data from in and around the Ellwood grove.

Is it possible to create a weather station for Ellwood Mesa to measure site-specific wind direction?

That would be great!