



Vegetation Management Program

The San Rafael City Council has adopted a Wildland-Urban Interface Ordinance and specific Vegetation Management requirements. This ordinance requires the creation of 100 feet of Defensible Space around structures in neighborhood areas determined to be at high risk of conflagration (a large destructive fire) due to the amount and type of vegetation interfacing with structures.

The success of this program, and more importantly its ability to reduce the high probability of fatalities and multiple structure loss, depends upon each property owner's aggressive participation to create the required defensible space.

What is Defensible Space?

An area, either natural or manmade, where material capable of causing a fire to spread has been treated, cleared, reduced, or changed to act as a barrier between an advancing wildland fire and resources or lives at risk. In practice, defensible space is generally defined as an area of 100 feet or more around a structure in which combustible brush and dead or dry vegetation have been properly managed to Fire Department requirements.

How Will We Work with Neighborhoods?

All property owners within the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Areas are obligated to create a required Defensible Space, and will be provided education, through literature and presentations, to will guide those efforts. Property owners are encouraged to work with their neighborhood associations to gain assistance with the chipping and hauling of the removed vegetation.

The City evaluated the hazards of neighborhoods within the WUI Areas and divided them into three groups based upon the Neighborhood Associations. The City’s intent is to reduce staff time by concentrating efforts to guide one group at a time, based on the City’s July to June Fiscal Year.

Therefore, Group 1 areas will be the focus in 2007-08, Group 2 in 2008-09, and Group 3 in 2009-10. In addition, the staff will begin to manage the public lands located within each Group’s area as required.

August 2007 – August 2008
Country Club
Lincoln, San Rafael Hill
Fairhills
Dominican
August 2008 – August 2009
Bayside
Upper Toyon
Santa Venetia
Villa Real/Loch Lomond
Bret Harte Ridge
West End
Gerstal Park
August 2009 – August 2010
Los Ranchitos
Channing Heights
Glenwood
Terra Linda
Peacock Gap

Fire Department Wildland-Urban Interface Program

- § Conducts neighborhood walkthrough inspections for the Focus Group.
 - Establishes appointments for parcel evaluation.
 - No citations given during the inspection.
 - For educational purposes.

- § Funds “Chipper Days”. (Chip and hauling service for Neighborhood Groups)

- § Provides educational hand-out/mail-out materials.

- § Makes presentations at Association meetings.
 - Working through the Association’s president.

- § Enforces vegetation standards.
 - Through observation.
 - On a “referral” basis.

- § Contracts to manage the vegetation on any City land to within 100 feet of the structures within WUI areas.

- § Maintains access to and along the Open Space Roads and gates.
- § Provides emergency locator signage at the Open Space Road intersections.
- § Works with other public entities (e.g., Open Space District, State Parks) to manage vegetation on their lands within 100 feet of structures within WUI areas.

*The Minimum you need to do is to
Create a Defensible Space
using the following requirements:*

Evaluate the area around your structure and those of others, as you are responsible to maintain a 100 foot defensible space from all structures.

Make a plan to accomplish the following requirements.

WITHIN 100 FEET OF ALL STRUCTURES:

1. Trim the limbs of trees up 10 feet from the ground.
 - a. Only trim limbs 3 inches or less in diameter.
2. Cut grasses to 3 inches in height above the ground.
3. Remove or cut all combustible vegetation such as, and not limited to, broom, gorse and other highly non-native plants (see attached list of required removals)
 - a. In areas on a slope, check with an arborist or nursery about the replacement of vegetation that is fire resistant and produces roots to prevent erosion if they are removed.
4. Trim tree limbs to a minimum of 10 feet away from the outlet of chimneys for 360 degrees.
5. Remove dead trees.
6. Remove all dead vegetation.
7. Trim all vegetation so each plant has separation of twice the height of the tallest of the adjacent plant.
8. Remove or chip all cut vegetation.
9. Maintain roof and deck areas free of combustible vegetation.

ADJACENT TO THE STRUCTURE

1. Remove combustible vegetation from under structural overhangs, including decks.
2. Remove all “gasoline plants” (Junipers and Bamboo) within 15 feet of your structure.
 - a. Replace with fire resistant plants to achieve the desired ornamental planting should you desire.
3. Remove all “gasoline plants” (Junipers and Bamboo) from between 15 feet and 100 feet from your structure by 2011.
 - a. Replace with fire resistive plants to achieve the desired ornamental planting should you desire.
4. Distance woodpiles a minimum of 2 times the height of the woodpile away from any component of the structure on the property.

ADJACENT TO ROADWAYS

1. Trim and maintain vegetation to within 10 feet of roadways as required for defensible space.
2. Trim trees so they do not hang lower than 13’6” above the roadway.

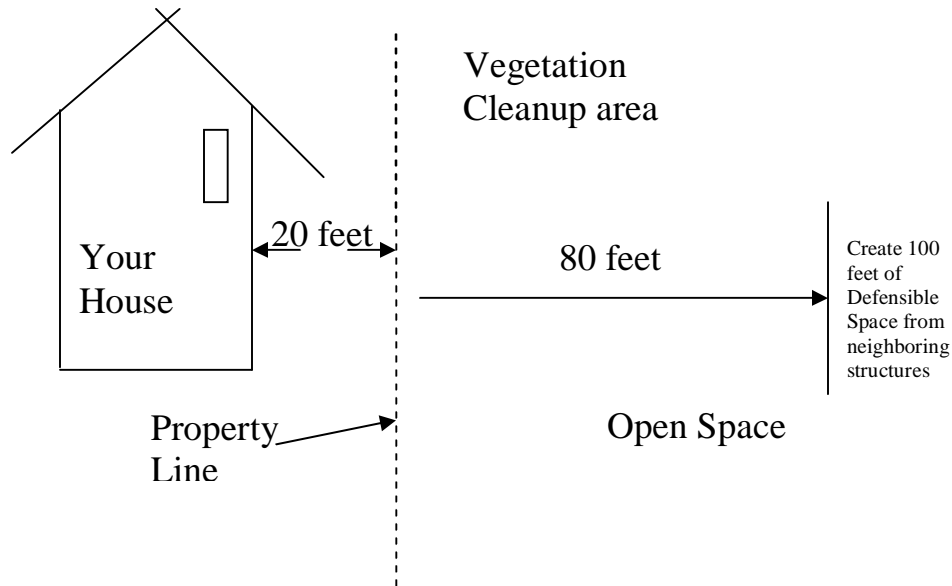
Fire Safety Practices

1. Do not use open flame within 15 feet of combustible vegetation.
2. Do not store combustible vegetation except as agreed upon for pickup.
3. Do not allow hot equipment such as mowers, saws, torches and automobile exhaust to contact combustible vegetation or material. Ensure that they are equipped with a spark arrestor.
4. When using mowers or metal cutting blades, pre-check the area for rocks or metal to avoid the blades making sparks.
5. Insure effective spark arresters are fitted on chimneys.
6. Always have a charged water supply available while conducting work (i.e. garden hose)
7. Do not smoke or discard smoking material within 15 feet of combustible vegetation.
8. Consider changing wood roofs to non-combustible.
 - a. Wood roofs in any location are susceptible to falling fire brands which can result in the loss of the structure and the spread to adjacent buildings and vegetation.
9. Coordinate vegetation management efforts with your neighborhood association to reduce your cost for chipping and hauling.

City Open Space Cleanup

It is time for all of us to create a 100 feet of Defensible Space around our structures.

On July 2, 2007, the City of San Rafael City Council passed an ordinance establishing the City's Wildland-Urban Interface, including requirements for vegetation management within this area. The San Rafael Fire Department is beginning to manage City Open Space vegetation beyond your property line that completes the 100-foot Defensible Space distance from your structure; as illustrated below:



If you have any access to and from the Open Space alongside of your house and would allow our contractors in the future to remove vegetation from the Open Space out to street access, please contact me. As we come into your area, I will coordinate details with you.

The Fire Department also has a "hotline" available for any vegetation questions or concerns that you may have. Call (415) 721-2875 and leave a message.

Thank you for participating in a partnership toward a higher standard of vegetation management within our City. This is an opportunity to model an effort that the rest of the County and State can use as a positive example of what is possible when people are willing to work together for a promising result.

Bradley R. Mark – Fire Captain Specialist
San Rafael Fire Department
Vegetation Management Program