THE CITY OF
EL CERRITO

PUBLIC WORKS

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AGENDA

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE URBAN FOREST COMMITTTEE

Monday, February 9, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.
Hana Gardens
10870 San Pablo Avenue
El Cerrito, CA 94530

This Meeting is Wheelchair Accessible

7:00 p.m. CONVENE SPECIAL MEETING

1. **ROLL CALL –** Chair Robin Mitchell; Vice-Chair Randi Jiménez; Members Akhil Iyer, Robert Hrubes, Jennifer Kaczor, Valerie Mih

2. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**
Remarks are typically limited to three minutes per person and are limited to items on the special meeting agenda only. Remarks on agenda items will be heard at the time the item is discussed.

3. **COMMITTEE MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE / CHANGES TO THE MEETING AGENDA -** (*10 minutes*)

4. **CITY COUNCIL / STAFF LIAISONS ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS -** *(10 minutes*) City Council Liaison Ktsanes and / or City Staff may report on Council policies, priorities, and significant actions taken by the City Council, and / or matters of general interest to the Urban Forest Committee (UFC).

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES** *(5 minutes)* Consider a motion to adopt the minutes of the January, 12 2026, meeting.

6. **PRESENTATION: EL CERRITO HNA DEFENSIBLE SPACE FUEL BREAKS & NATIVE GRASSLAND RESTORATION,** *Valerie Mih* (*25 minutes).* Hear and discuss the presentation, consider possible action items.

7. COLLABORATION WITH THE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE - (3 *minutes*) Hear updates, participate in discussion, and consider possible action items regarding collaborating with the EQC.

8. COLLABORATION WITH THE PARK AND RECREATION COMMISSION- (3 *minutes*) Hear updates, participate in discussion, and consider possible action items regarding collaborating with the PRC.

9. URBAN FOREST COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES, CALENDAR, AND WORK PLAN: Hear updates, participate in discussion, and consider possible actions that correspond with development of the Urban Forest Committee Work Plan and calendar of events.

A. Arbor Week Planning (*Kaczor, Mitchell, all*)

B. Outreach Flyer Review (Jiménez)

C. City Tree Planting Discussion- Review City Tree Care Agreement, relevant City of El Cerrito ordinances and Standard Operating Procedures (*Prée*)

D. UFC Work Plan Implementation Strategy

10. ITEMS FROM TONIGHT'S MEETING THAT REQUIRE FURTHER ACTION *(3 minutes)*

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS- hear committee member suggestions for future UFC meeting items *(5 minutes)*

- Arbor Week 2026
- El Cerrito Urban Tree Fund
- Review the Arbor Day Foundation's "Tree Board Handbook"
- UFC Work Plan Implementation Strategy

12. ADJOURNMENT

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Staff Liaison, 510-559-7685. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. (28 CFR 35.102-35.104 ADA Title I).

Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the members regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at the El Cerrito Recycling Center

El Cerrito Hillside Nature Area Defensible Space, Fuel Breaks & Native Grassland Restoration

Presentation 1, January 2026
In reference to UFC Work Plan Item D.1.a:
Implementation and funding of the
HNA Management Plan

HNA Plan (2025)

Presentation focus: Objectives 1.1 & 1.2

From HNA Plan: In areas where 100 ft of defensible space extends into the HNA, 1.1 takes priority over 1.2, as 1.1 requires higher fire safety standard (p. 56-69).

Action	Priority	Location	Prescription	Lead Department	Cost Category [2]
1: Create Defensible Space (Objective 1.1)	**Highest**	Within 100 feet of dwelling structures immediately adjacent to the HNA.	Where dwelling structures are closer than 100 feet from the HNA, the City will manage portions of the HNA within this distance to create a defensible space by maintaining vegetation. The City will promote Contra Costa County Measure X as a funding source for private property owners to manage the portions of their properties within this distance.	El Cerrito Fire Department	$$ one-time $ ongoing
2: Establish Shaded Fuel Breaks (Objective 1.2)	**High**	A 100- feet wide shaded fuel break along the entire perimeter of the HNA, beginning at the property boundary (where feasible i.e., the presence of a drainage or other topographic features may prohibit full 100' feet.)	Establish and maintain a shaded fuel break by removing or pruning trees, shrubs, brush, and other vegetative growth. A canopy of large native trees will be maintained where possible. All work will be accomplished by use of hand crews or mechanical equipment; supported by chippers and/or burning as determined appropriate on a case-by-case basis, while conserving native vegetation.	El Cerrito Fire Department El Cerrito Public Works Department	$$$ one-time $ ongoing
3: Remove Eucalyptus And Non Native Conifers (Objective 1.3)	**High-medium, depending on location and cost**	1. The eucalyptus stand at Motorcycle Hill 2. The extensive eucalyptus stand at Quarry Hill 3. Eucalyptus and other non-native trees between Kent Court and Buckingham Drive 4. Non-native invasive trees on the Madera property 5. The Ken Smith eucalyptus grove and potentially along riparian corridors (likely requires permit from CDFW).	Stand removal involves the felling of all standing trees and prevention of resprouting from the stump. Landings are typically needed to sort, store, and chip cut trees into mulch and spread or remove the material. Stump treatments may include herbicides and tarping. Small logs and branches may be burned or chipped. Include follow-up treatments for latent seedling and weed management.	El Cerrito Public Works Department El Cerrito Fire Department	$$$$ one-time $ ongoing

Dwelling structures immediately adjacent to HNA - fencelines

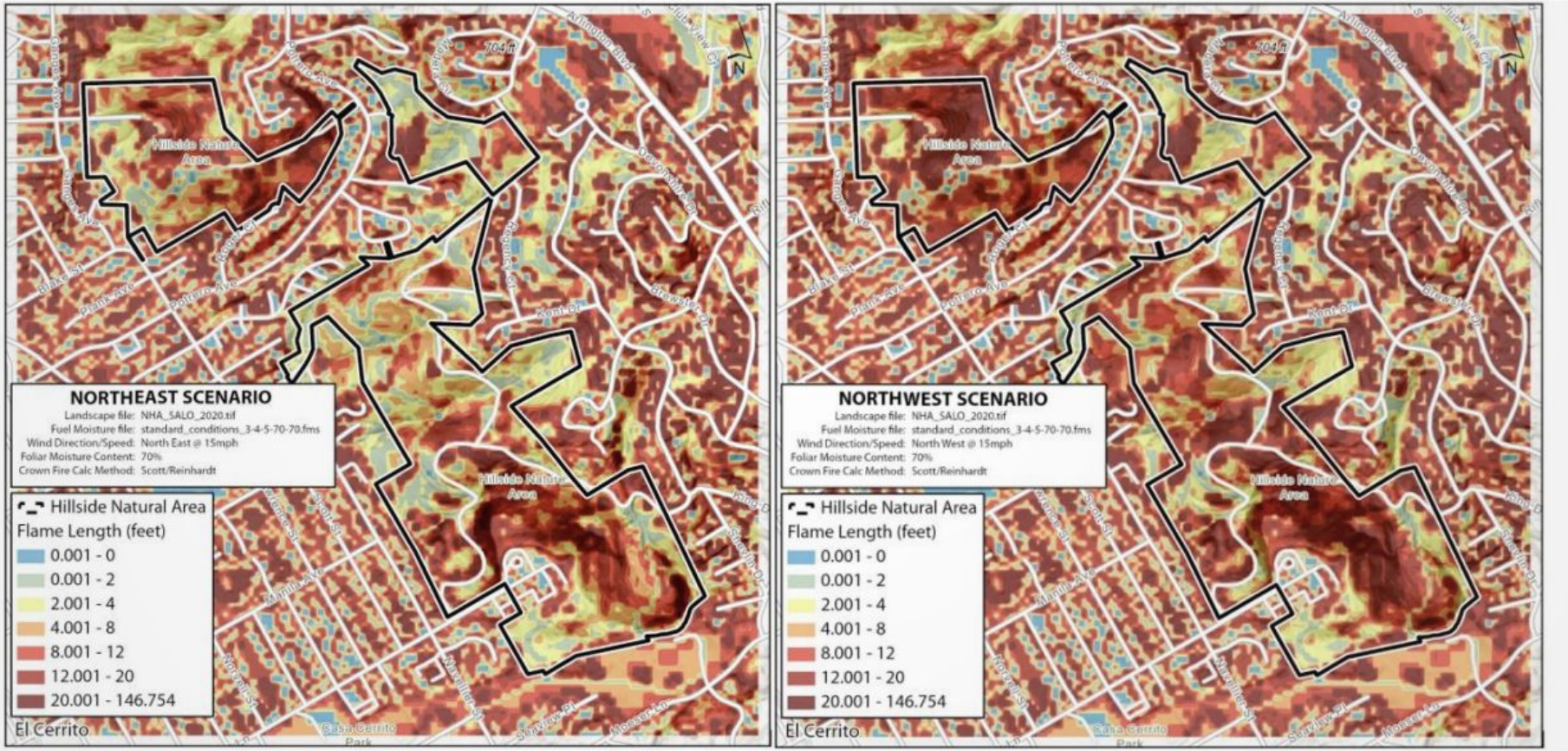


Figure 12: Flame length map comparison – northeast wind scenario is on the left and northwest wind scenario is on the right side of page. HNA boundary is shown in black.

California Native Grasslands provide

- Reduced fuel load (spaced out, lower growing)
- Fire resistance (less flammable, green longer)
- Suppression of non-native flammable grasses

Native grasses (bunchgrasses) grow in spaced clumps with bare soil for wildflowers, adapted to drought (deep-rooted, perennial). Invasive annual grasses cover densely, grow quickly and form thick mats, dying in summer. Natives have space between clumps; invasives fill in completely.

Sources:
https://www.asparagusmagazine.com/articles/californias-golden-rolling-hills-are-covered-in-non-native-invasive-grass-species
https://www.calfloranursery.com/plants/stipa-pulchra-aka-nassella-pulchra

Grassland Restoration: 2 Approaches

Craig Dremann / Kite Hill Wildflower Preserve

- Strategic mowing & targeted soil amendments (if needed)

Glen Schneider / Skyline Gardens

- Various weeding tactics & targeted vinegar treatment

- Both primarily utilize in-ground native seed bank (cost savings), with supplemental planting (if needed)
- Both leverage non-native plant biology - majority of nonnative grass seeds viable for 3 years (Ex. Wild oats)

Craig Dremann Method - Strategic Mowing & Amendments

1. Remove cut dry invasive weed grass thatch (June/July)
   - Clippings are a fire hazard, physical barrier; weed allelochemicals suppress native seed germination
2. If needed per soil tests and test plot results, apply organic soil amendments before October rains
3. From January - May, mow to 8-12” high to prevent invasive grasses from setting seed & reproducing (while leaving natives intact)
   - Best done monthly, but at least in mid-March and mid-May to cut 2nd round of invasive seed heads
   - In June, mow to level of natives, remove dry cuttings.
4. Evaluate & continue process to fully establish native plant cover to 85-95% (~3-4 years)

Mowing by prof. contractors

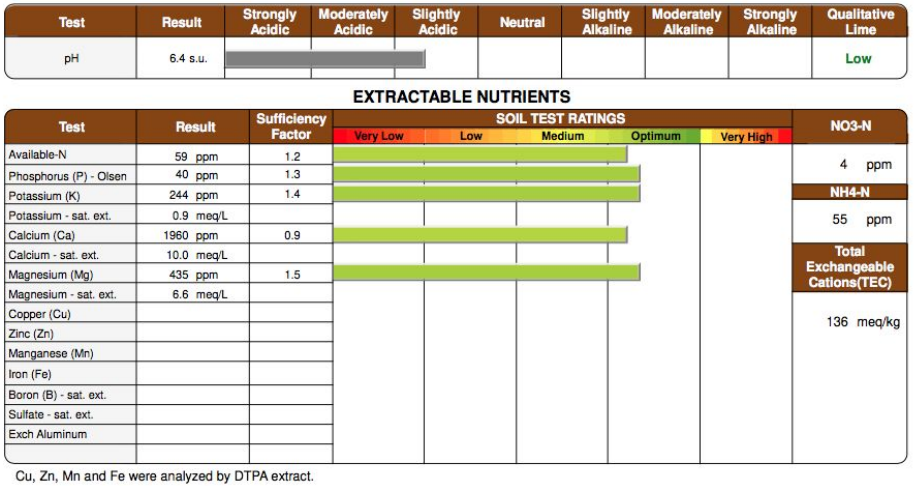
Method adjusted to the specific site's needs (link)

Year 1 - Conduct soil tests and if soil depleted, conduct small test plots to trial amendment amounts (10' x 10' plots)

- Control plot
- 4-5 mowed test plots with varying amounts of amendments
- Evaluate before & after % of native cover

Year 2+: Implement in larger areas & scale as budget allows

Craig Dremann is a native plant expert who conducts restoration for municipalities (Woodside, Palo Alto, Albany) & private landowners; 40 years exp. He co-teaches a California ecological restoration course at Cañada College in Redwood City.



Test	Result	Strongly Acidic	Moderately Acidic	Slightly Acidic	Neutral	Slightly Alkaline	Moderately Alkaline	Strongly Alkaline	Qualitative Lime
pH	6.4 s.u.								Low

EXTRACTABLE NUTRIENTS

Test	Result	Sufficiency Factor	SOIL TEST RATINGS: Very Low / Low / Medium / Optimum / Very High
Available-N	59 ppm	1.2	
Phosphorus (P) - Olsen	40 ppm	1.3	
Potassium (K)	244 ppm	1.4	
Potassium - sat. ext.	0.9 meq/L		
Calcium (Ca)	1960 ppm	0.9	
Calcium - sat. ext.	10.0 meq/L		
Magnesium (Mg)	435 ppm	1.5	
Magnesium - sat. ext.	6.6 meq/L		
Copper (Cu)			
Zinc (Zn)			
Manganese (Mn)			
Iron (Fe)			
Boron (B) - sat. ext.			
Sulfate - sat. ext.			
Exch Aluminum			

NO3-N	
	4 ppm
NH4-N	
	55 ppm
Total Exchangeable Cations(TEC)	
	136 meq/kg

Cu, Zn, Mn and Fe were analyzed by DTPA extract.

Skyline Gardens/Glen Schneider (project of CNPS/EBMUD)

1. Remove invasive weeds, thatch & clippings

Restoration Sequence

Year	Major activity	Method	Other
1	Prevent Seed formation	Weed-eater	Hand cut
2	Prevent new seedlings	Vinegar spray	Hand weed
3	Sow natives	Seed banks	Broadcast; weed

High ridge with areas of native plants, maintained by volunteers

Use of Vinegar Spray (link)

Vinegar is a contact spray that burns the foliage of plants. Before spraying, individual native plants are identified and covered for protection.

“Working from the base of…[pre-existing] native perennials, our basic strategy is to exhaust the seed bank of the invasive annuals. Most of these invasives and their seeds are actually quite short-lived in the soil. They quite straightforward to eradicate in a 3-year time frame – if they are not allowed to go to seed.”

Glen Schneider is a naturalist/gardener who has specialized in ecosystem restoration through the planting of local native plants. He teaches at Skyline Gardens.

Suggestions: HNA Defensible Space & Fuel Break

- Reduce/eliminate invasive grasses by removal, halting reproduction & exhausting seed bank ~3 years
- Restoration: Refrain from mowing/removing native plants; support in-ground native seed bank to restore fire-resistant native grasses; supplement if needed

Discussion & Suggested next steps

- Identify HNA Plan Objective 1.1 & 1.2 priority areas along HNA perimeter & adjacent property fencelines
- Gather more details on process, cost, materials, etc