



Sonoma Coast Collaborative

Statement of Purpose

The Sonoma Coast Collaborative (SC Collaborative) was formed to work across community boundaries and address hazardous wildfire fuels across both private and public lands with the goal of creating a continuous network of strategically placed ridgeline shaded fuel breaks, access/evacuation road fuel breaks, and community safety zones along the Sonoma Coast. This will be achieved by developing a comprehensive landscape-level planning map of fuels reduction projects throughout the region that individual communities and organizations can implement on their individual land holdings, while also tying into the larger region-wide planning framework of projects.

Overview

The Sonoma Coast Collaborative is a consortium of private and public landowners located along the central and north coast mountain range of Sonoma County. It encompasses approximately 91,000 acres along the coast range from the town of Jenner, north to Stewart's Point, and extends approximately 8 miles inland from the coast (see attached map).

The lands of this region support a rich assemblage of biological diversity and provide a multitude of benefits to our communities. From clean air, to clean water, timber products and wine, the forests and grasslands of the region form the foundation of our community. However, the forests of this region contain hazardous fuel conditions due to several factors that have transpired over many years. A century of fire suppression and commercial forestry practices have tended to overstock the forests with trees; this has led to a buildup of hazardous fuel loads. Sudden Oak Death (SOD) has ravaged the region killing a majority of tan oaks (and some live oaks) leaving dead and dying trees (dry wildfire fuels) throughout the region. Areas that experienced the last major fire of the area, the Creighton Ridge Fire of 1978, were heavily replanted with Ponderosa Pine, which is not native to the coast, is experiencing mortality due to drought conditions and pine pitch canker, and is highly flammable. Similarly, Bishop Pine along the coast has suffered from the drought, pine pitch canker, and are dead and dying, exacerbating the already heavy fuel loads. Due to these high fuel load conditions, Cal Fire's Hazardous Fuels Map shows this region to be predominantly in the "High Fire Hazard Severity Zone."

Recent fires that have impacted Sonoma County and the surrounding region over the last three years occurred during dry wind events coming from the north and east, a condition that makes the ocean influence in our region non-existent. Without the moist air and cooling effects of the ocean, our forests experience single-digit relative humidity, low fuel moisture levels, and are tinder dry – prime conditions for a catastrophic wildfire. Without the maritime influence, our forest will burn just as hot and intensely as those of the Tubbs, Kincaid, Glass, and Wallbridge Fires.

The SC Collaborative was formed due to the high likelihood of catastrophic fire in the region and the fact that land ownership covers a diverse range of landholdings, from privately owned small to large properties, to a few large publicly owned landscapes. In order to provide comprehensive landscape level planning to the region, the SC Collaborative was formed so that fuel reduction projects on one property can be extended onto adjacent, neighboring properties, creating a continuous network of shaded fuel breaks, access road/evacuation road fuel breaks, and community safety zones throughout the region.

By collaborating together, we plan to address the high fuel loads by using the various resources at hand to implement projects: volunteer workdays; pile burns; prescribed burns; targeted grazing; mechanical and hand-labor implementation and maintenance of Shaded Fuel Breaks along strategic ridgelines and access/evacuation roads; defensible space around homes and utilities; and creation of community safety zones with reduced fuel loads for those community members unable to escape the area during a fast-moving wildfire. By collaborating together, we will be able to pool our collective resources and develop landscape-level strategic planning that uses limited funds in a timely and efficient manner.

Proposed list of Participating Organizations:

- Coast Ridge Community Forest
- Gualala Ranch
- Navarro Ranch
- Seaview Ranch
- Muniz Ranches
- Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of Stewarts Point Rancheria
- The Wildlands Conservancy
- Sonoma Land Trust
- Padmasambhava Peace Institute
- Aranya Bodhi Hermitage
- Sonoma County Regional Parks
- California State Parks
- Save the Redwoods League
- Rips Redwoods

Comprehensive Collaborative Planning Map

Community members from the various organizations listed above have begun meeting with local fire chiefs and emergency responders to identify strategic areas for fuel breaks, access road and utility fuel reduction areas, and safety zones. Once these areas are delineated on a map and connected with projects across the region, each organization will work to implement

fuel reduction projects within their communities, while also tying in with the larger comprehensive planning effort of the Sonoma Coast Collaborative. Organizations will be able to highlight the fuel reduction planning efforts across boundaries to show potential funding organizations that their funds will be well spent and play a part of achieving larger, landscape-level fuel reduction goals throughout the region.