



COUNTYWIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROPOSED MEASURE H, MARCH 2024



The overall goal of vegetation management is to restore wildfire as a natural process to balance the protection of life and property with natural resource conservation. Vegetation management treatments reduce wildfire intensity, and loss of structures due to ember intrusion. Vegetation management projects funded through Proposed Measure H will be consistent with the goals and objectives described in State, Federal, and local wildfire risk reduction plans, supplying community level benefits such as:

- **Roadside vegetation management** which seeks to support safe evacuations and fire fighter access.
- **Wildland urban interface (shaded) fuel breaks** which seeks to reduce wildfire intensity and ember production.
- **Strategic (shaded) fuel breaks** which seeks to supply locations which may act to stop or slow a wildfire, and/or support prescribed burning and reduce bulldozer lines during wildfire suppression.
- **Community chipping days** which seeks to promote fire adapted communities through defensible space efforts and community organized vegetation managed projects.
- **Prescribed burning** (broadcast and pile) for large area vegetation management treatments
- **Ecological restoration** which seeks to create resilient landscapes

REVENUE FROM THE PROPOSED TAX MEASURE WILL PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING:

Revenue from Proposed Measure H is expected to provide an estimated at \$5M annually, which must be used as follows:

DEVELOPMENT of Vegetation Management Projects

- Fire agencies are expected to collaborate with community organizations to design and develop vegetation management projects. Doing so will allow fire agencies to:
 - Obtain community support and property owner consent.
 - Define geographic area and type of vegetation management treatment(s)
- Fire Safe Sonoma and fire agencies are expected to work with involved stakeholders seeking to ensure best management practices and environmental compliance.

PRIORITIZATION of Vegetation Management Projects

- Fire Safe Sonoma is expected to use risk assessment tools, such as the Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), and wildfire risk index and community-based risk reduction plans, such as Firewise USA to help communities seeking to determine local wildfire risk, identify and prioritize mitigation strategies, and assist with designating where vegetation management projects should be implemented.
- Additional funding sources such as grants and foundations are expected to be sought out

IMPLEMENTATION of Vegetation Management Projects

- Proposed Measure H revenue must be used to for personnel (not classified as public safety) specifically assigned to:
 - Perform vegetation management treatments.
 - Provide project supervision.
 - Liaison with property owners during a project.

“Wildfires will happen. Our County needs to remain resilient and be “fire adapted.” Vegetation management is necessary to become fire adapted by reducing our wildfire risk and making firefighters’ response safe and effective. Five percent of the countywide half cent sales tax is designated for the implementation of vegetation management projects throughout the county. Vegetation management projects will be designed to mimic the role of wildfire as a natural disturbance process critical for the protection of our natural resources and compliment defensible space and wildfire resistant building construction to protect lives and structures.”

- **Marshall Turbeville**, Fire Chief, Countywide Vegetation Management Administrator

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

➤ **How much will this proposed tax generate?**

This proposed ½ cent sales tax is expected to generate approximately \$60 million annually to address the current and future funding challenges that face EVERY fire agency in the county, and which must be used to sustain and improve fire protection and medical response service levels. The actual sales tax amount will change annually in proportion to Countywide taxable retail sales.

➤ **Will this proposed sales tax include revenue for wildfire risk reduction?**

Proposed Measure H is expected to supply around \$9M of revenue, which is expected to be used for the County's first dedicated and recurring source of funding for wildfire safety and risk reduction, including funding for sustained vegetation management services. The Northern Sonoma County Fire Protection District will receive 5% of the sales tax (estimated to be approximately \$3M) which would be specifically allocated towards countywide vegetation management. The Fire District is expected to employ and manage a division of vegetation management employees and contractors to implement countywide vegetation management projects in collaboration with Fire Safe Sonoma, which is expected to receive approximately \$250,000 annually, and other fire agencies. Additionally, funding may be used to supply command staff in the dispatch center and extra firefighters at fire stations during Red-Flag events.

➤ **Is there a mechanism to receive additional revenue to achieve comprehensive wildfire risk reduction?**

In addition to supplying additional funding for wildfire safety and risk reduction, proposed Measure H includes a framework for seeking, assembling, and using additional funding sources including grant funding, mitigation payments, local agency special taxes, and private donations or payments.

➤ **How are decisions expected to be made regarding which projects get funded?**

A comprehensive strategy for achieving measurable reduction in wildfire risks and loss will be developed based on the Countywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan and other available resources. Each year a set of candidate projects will be solicited, reviewed, and prioritized by Fire Safe Sonoma following formal consultations with fire protection agencies, community-based organizations, private industry, and other project proponents. An assembly of elected officials representing the participating fire protection agencies will meet semi-annually to review and authorize the recommended priority project expenditures.

➤ **How will the expenditures be governed?**

Funds from proposed Measure H will be received and distributed by the Sonoma County Auditor-Controller-Treasurer-Tax Collector. An independent oversight committee is required to review the sales tax expenditures of each fire district annually, determining whether funds were used in compliance with Measure H's specific requirements. This independent oversight committee will be made up of representatives from Sonoma County Fire District's Association, Sonoma County Fire Chief's Association, nominees selected by the Board of Supervisors, nominees selected by City Mayors, Labor representatives and citizens at large.



**For more information, please visit
SonomaChiefs.org**

