

Q&A | Day 3 | Oct. 14th



# WILDFIRE

WEATHER | WATER | WEEDS | WILDLIFE

#	Question	Answer(s)
1	<b>Where I live and work we are in a WUI and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The water agencies are paying owners up to \$4/SF to remove lawns surrounding houses. Many of this series' photos show lawns surrounding homes that didn't burn while others did. Can someone comment on this seeming conflict. Conspicuous lawns are also prevalent in printed and online literature.</b>	<p>Hi Jodie. It's not necessarily the presence of grass/lawn that's important, as much as the utilization of appropriate species and proper maintenance/management of the vegetation around your home.</p> <p>This is also an issue in LA City, with LAFD</p>
2	<b>@Rorie I saw 1 demo on the Green Climber on slopes and it seemed it tore up the surface plane.</b>	<p>Hadn't heard that---will check it out. Clearly we don't want issues like disc-ing does introducing soil disturbance!</p> <p>I tried to send a video. Size problems. You did say trained operator....we had a demo operator.</p>

**3 “remove and thin flammable natives, e.g. sumac, chemise, buckwheat, sage” Can anyone point to the science that shows that these specific plants are more flammable than non-native shrubs and other plants?**

At the bottom of this page is a hyperlink to the document, "Research Literature Review of Plant Flammability Testing, Fire-Resistant Plant Lists and Relevance of a Plant Flammability Key for Ornamental Landscape Plants in the Western States." I can't say whether it references documents regarding those species specifically, but it is a good resource.

<https://ucanr.edu/sites/fire/Prepare/Landscaping/>

I would also question whether they were tested in an irrigated and maintained garden context, if groundcover selections were tested, etc.

**4 I would be wonderful to see habitat and native plants closer to homes as part of defensible space. If we push it out to 200' from structures in our region, we would have no habitat.**

We live in an densely populated county where the managed community is the predominant model. Not houses on multiple acres.

the RCDSMM has done some wildfire resiliency planning for such communities- a few hundred homes adjacent to or surrounded by wildland "patches". i hope to one day to be able share this work with the HOA permission, but i can tell you that it still boils down to "from the house out" approach, and the health and beauty of the wildland context can be maintained if we follow those principles. we also looked at some seasonal management approaches since they had community irrigation system, such as a "simulated monsoon" to increase fuel moisture content prior to the highest risk seasons. see <https://defensiblespace.org>

<p><b>5 I've been reading about the response to fire in other Mediterranean climates such as Australia. I've read about planted fuel breaks to slow fire rather than clearing. This would seem to benefit fire fighters in slowing fire and offer an alternative view to clearing for habitat. Are there any thoughts on this?</b></p>	<p>Shaded fuel breaks are used where feasible and appropriate, which are similar to the planted fuel breaks you reference. Planned fuel break and fuel reduction projects try to manage the various resource needs while achieving moderation of fire behavior. Frequently this means leaving some vegetation, but appropriately spaced such that fire spread can be slowed, stopped, and/or there is an opportunity for firefighters to safely engage in direct fire suppression. A general rule of thumb is a horizontal fuel spacing of 1.5 - 2.5x the fuel height, depending on slope and other site specific considerations. There's also management of the vertical continuity of fuels, commonly referred to as ladder fuels. Trying to achieve all of these management goals can be challenging.</p>
<p><b>6 If my community looked like the one on this slide, it would be completely bare for 1500 acres.</b></p>	
<p><b>7 I would also question whether they were tested in an irrigated and maintained garden context, if groundcover selections were tested, etc.</b></p>	

<p><b>8 I'm wondering why swales and rain gardens aren't included in defensible space guidelines. These areas can hold water for long periods of time and increase ambient air moisture.</b></p>	<p>we may be able to cover this in the discussion- you may have noticed the rain cistern in the demo structure ron showed- that will ultimately be connected to a bioswale and then an oak woodland drainage. its possible to include these elements appropriately in a sustainable defensible space. see <a href="http://www.defensiblespace.org">www.defensiblespace.org</a></p>
<p><b>9 The climate, vegetation, and human land use in southern CA are very different than those in northern CA, yet some state mandates and prescriptions developed in northern CA are applied to southern CA, where they may not be effective. Can you address how fire and fuels management practices are tailored to the specific conditions in southern CA, particularly for the management of shrublands?</b></p>	<p>We are a large, diverse state! As practitioners of fire and fuels management in southern California we (CAL FIRE, USFS, BLM, LA County Fire, Conservancies, Resource Conservation Districts, and the many other land management agencies) do our best to use the best available science and methods to provide resource protection and fire hazard risk reduction. Sometimes there are statewide (or federal) rules and regulations with which we must comply, but it mostly comes down to understanding the landscape and ecosystems in which we work. Long story short, it comes down to the boots on the ground.</p>
<p><b>10 Glad to see Ice Plant off the good to plant list.</b></p>	<p>live answered</p> <p>Props to PlantRight and our local Weed Management Area and others for getting the word out about the negative impacts of invasive species!</p>

**11 To what degree should prescribed fire practices be applied to southern CA shrublands, because they may cause type conversion to more flammable grasslands, resulting in greater fire risk.**

As Jerry mentioned, prescribed fire is one of many management tools. Some areas are too steep or have some other site specific considerations that prevent manual or mechanical treatment. There are also cost and crew availability considerations. In the right place and with appropriate reentry intervals, prescribed fire can be appropriate to treat shrubland.

For southern CA, prescribed fire should directly relate to strategic advantage and habitat. As an example, LA County Fire coordinated with Malibu Creek State Park to burn Russian Star Thistle over a three year period. This invasive species was greatly reduced while also reducing the fine fuel threat it produced.

Hi Ron, thanks very much for your talk. Quick question about post-Woolsey vegetation restoration treatments - are there any ongoing efforts to support regrowth of chaparral in lieu of the invasives that are popping up all over Malibu?

Data shows there is typically a strong seed bed in place, so restoration efforts can potentially do more harm than good, like bringing in invasives. Where possible, it's best to eliminate or minimize additional human impacts while the watershed recovers. Off road cycling can be a major issue, opening new trails and bringing erosion. With enough time, where natives can germinate and produce seed, the habitat will recover and type conversion can be avoided. Fire return intervals less than 7 years can certainly lead to type conversion.

<p><b>12 Would it not be simpler to use fire hazard maps to zone land to prevent future human development and incursions into high fire hazard zones? How about buy-back programs to purchase property in high fire hazard zones that have been destroyed by fire. Because 95% of the fire ignitions in southern CA are related to human activities and infrastructure, would it not be better to control patterns of development to provide for community safety?</b></p>	<p>This is certainly a goal that LA County Regional Planning is working on. This issue relates to private property development rights and zoning, layered with the FHSZ maps. If your in a fire zone, there are, and should be building requirements, such as Chapter 7A and fuel modification plan requirements.</p> <p>hi scott. good point regarding future inhabitation planning. the challenge with buy-backs of existing loss areas is more than financial. these are homelands. in addition, the primary driver of home structure loss is ember intrusion and so the majority of losses we have in these interface areas are caused by “soft” structures that could and should be hardened. we are looking at education and incentives to help that happen before losses occur.</p>	<p>again, for hardening and defensible space:  <a href="https://defensiblespace.org">https://defensiblespace.org</a></p>
<p><b>13 Could city of LA consider funding home owners to reestablish native habitat and fire wise vegetation? Specially when removing fast fuel of invasive grasses. A way to aid stop the weed cycle.</b></p>	<p>And county. WUI and high fire zone areas</p>	<p>I thought the moderated discussion regarding incentization of defensible space addressed this pretty well, and you bring up some good points. In these situations, I always recommend reaching out to your local City Council member or government representative. That's where ideas like this really start coming to fruition.</p>

<p><b>14 For those responsible for prescribed burns, are you able to change/cancel your plans if a wildfire intervenes and burns many acres in the same forest area before you do? or do you just proceed?</b></p>	<p>Prescribed burn plans can and will change based on air quality and weather conditions to prioritize public safety. Here's a good resource of how CA Air Resources Board regulates prescribed fire:  <a href="https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/prescribed-burning/about">https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/our-work/programs/prescribed-burning/about</a></p>	<p>All LA County Fire projects are re-evaluated when environmental conditions change. If a project no longer provides strategic advantage, the project gets shelved until strategic advantage conditions present again.</p>
<p><b>15 Is there any opinion on the effectiveness of the Quincy Library Group prescribed burns?</b></p>	<p>I'm not familiar specifically with QLG's prescribed burns, but the QLG was a very successful partnership that helped provided consensus among a diverse group of stakeholders on a variety of land management practices.</p>	

**16 vanden Water and North showed that there is too much fire in southern CA, and Syphard and Keeley have shown that various human activities result in high fire frequency, sometimes leading to type conversion. It is not at all clear that prescribed fire in the National Forests is effective in preventing fire spread, particularly given ember cast, and it certainly has environmental impacts..**

agreed. on all points. we really do have have regional conditions that dont often get the attention that “healty (northern/sierra) forests” do in a sacramento press conference. however, we are making strides on this. i like to tell people that in a chapparal/coastal sage context, all fires are crown fires. our “forests” dont have trunks. think of trees without legs. and yes, we burn our ecosystems (and communities) all too frequently. as ron noted, we also have a very consistent wilfire condition. our coordinated firefighter groups are the best in the world. we dont worry unless the wind is blowing- and it always blows in the same direction. we have only one type of truly dangerous fire and we are working on modeling that fire to design appropriate landscape management and design responses. stay tuned

**17 The USFS showed very little consensus-building in integrating public input on the Pine Mountain project.**

hi scott- i am not familiar with the pine mountain project, but we have had with community engagement with a “subsidiarity” approach- begin with the house, then with neighborhood scale “fire safe councils” to define shared goals and needs. the next scale is the community wildfire protection plan level (multi-community). when these organizations are developed, the proposals to the county, state and federal partners are more successful and bring funding for the projects the community has authored, rather than being helicoptered in from the big government level- in large part because they become a an engaged community member through a fireshed planning process. their is a “community” section at <https://defensiblespace.org>. might get ideas there

**18 Thanks, Sabrina. We live a few miles from the Alisal Fire, but have not yet been told to evacuate.**

Hoping for the best .

<p><b>19 Hi Clark, The Pine Mountain and Mt. Pinos projects were proposed by the USFS to reduce fuels in sky mountain forests and old growth chaparral in Ventura County. The plan received 100's of comments from the public, 99.9% which were opposed to the projects because of impacts on native habitats and species. Nevertheless the USFS decided to move ahead with the Pine Mountain project.</b></p>	<p>oh- pinos. i had heard about this just dont call it pine mountain unless you are talking about Pine Mountain Club. i spend alot of time up there in lockwood valley. also work with the chumash tribe. they call the two peaks (frazier too) iwahinmu and tosholo. they could be an ally in sustainable forest management. this is the literal beating heart of their homeland (cuddy valley and its faultline intersection). we work with them and perhaps could facilitate collaboration with them (RCDSMM)</p>	<p>I grew up camping on Mt Pinos and still take my family there every year, what they are proposing seems like it would devastate some of the habitat up there and I am very opposed, let me know if I can help in any way</p>
<p><b>20 Ben is it possible to set up a gardner training in the City Of Monrovia? NativeGardenPatch@gmail.com</b></p>	<p>Thank you Karen, it would be great to discuss working with you as a pilot class for this, we will reach out to you!</p>	<p>please contact me at cstevens@rcdsmm.org and copy akunsch@rcdsmm.org. we are beginning a grant work to organize WUI communities in the "rim of the valley" and angeles adjacent areas- monrovia is one such community</p>
<p><b>21 Ben - really great presentation. The wildfire landscaping certification is a great idea and I am curious to hear about the progress in making this certification a reality. Is there any effort to connect this certification to other parties, such as NFPA or insurance agencies?</b></p>	<p>Hi Harrison, we having submitted several proposals to support the creation of this, but no luck quite yet. It won't take a lot of money and we have the infrastructure, we just need some resources to get us going. We have spoken with NFPA a bit, but I'm not sure if they will help. Let me know if you have ideas and feel free to reach out to me ben@usgbc-la.org</p>	

<p><b>22 Hi Clark, There are two projects. One for Pine Mountain (yes, in the vicinity of the Club) and the other at Mt. Pinos. Yes, the Chumash have taken a lead in opposing the USFS plans.</b></p>	
<p><b>23 Sabrina, Many of the methods for controlling invasive weeds, such as mowing, grazing, or prescribed fire, result in the perpetuation of these invasive weeds, because they are adapted to disturbance. What methods would you suggest for replacing fine fuels (particularly non-native grasses) with native plant formations?</b></p>	<p>This is certainly a challenge - are there are no easy answers. I thiunk you make a good point that backs up some of what my colleague Chris discusses - that we need to include narrow spectrum herbicides, judiciously used, in our tool kit. In addition, we need to be serious about source control - one reason I am generally opposed to seeding for erosion control. Finally, we need to realize the impacts of both smoke and non-fire related emissions in adding nitrogen, and tipping the scales to favor invasive grasses (you've probably read Edith Allen's research on this). It's all about creating the conditions that allow the competitive advantages of native plants to be realized.</p>
<p><b>24 How do you balance state mandates for providing more housing, particularly affordable housing, with preventing build-out into the WUI, which would increase fire risk? As an example, does anyone want to comment on the Tejon Ranch planned community projects in LA County, such as the Centennial project?</b></p>	<p>Infill! and "adjusting" some of the financial incentives to continued growth (such as Prop 13).</p>

<b>25 Pre COVID, Seneca was trying to create a San Gabriel Mountains FSA. I hope it revives.</b>	
<b>26 Yes, I agree. It often seems that fire prevention programs are a subsidy for wealthy landowners that live in the WUI or wildlands.</b>	Not all of them are wealthy. Some are just like us. Working, going home, but with better scenery and horrible commutes.