



AGENDA REPORT

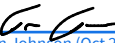
TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Damon Covington
Fire Chief

SUBJECT: California Firesafe Council Grant

DATE: September 15, 2025

City Administrator Approval


Jestin Johnson (Oct 2, 2025 15:47:12 PDT)

Date: 10/02/2025

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To: (A) Enter Into An Agreement With The California Firesafe Council To Accept Grant Funds In The Amount Of One Hundred Seven Thousand Tow Hundred Seventy Five Dollars (\$107,275); (B) Appropriate And Administer Said Funds; And (C) Expend Grant Funds In Accordance With The City's Purchasing Requirements For The Purpose Of Fuel Mitigation And Goat Grazing Services In 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, the Oakland Fire Department applied for and was awarded a \$107,275 grant from the California Firesafe Council to cover costs associated with the department's goat grazing contract, a key component of the City's ten-year Vegetation Management Plan. Adoption of this proposed resolution will allow the department to accept this grant award funds and pay goat grazing vendors which the city is already under contract with.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Following the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire, the Oakland Fire Department (OFD) initiated several innovative strategies to ensure that the city and its residents never had to endure another tragic event like the devastating Firestorm.

The City Council adopted a resolution in 2019 making Wildfire Prevention a citywide priority. At that time, a coordinated Wildfire Prevention Working Group was initiated that included representatives from every City department. The working group meets monthly and more often as needed and serves as a consistent reminder that every department in the city government has a role to play in the prevention and response to a major emergency, including wildfires.

Due to the Oakland Fire Department's annual pre-planning, comprehensive vegetation management and proactive inspection program, pre-positioning of wildland apparatus, and the commitment of tens of thousands of Oaklanders to create and maintain defensible space, the

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city has been spared from the type of tragic wildfires that have devastated parts of California over the last five years. Meanwhile, our memory of the Oakland Firestorm in 1991 keeps our residents and our department extremely vigilant.

ANALYSIS/POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The Oakland Fire Department has one of the most comprehensive wildfire prevention programs in California. Annually, the Fire Department [inspects 25,000+ private and city-owned parcels](#), conducts year round fuel mitigation on thousands of acres in the hills, executes many miles of roadside clearing projects, and deploys one of the largest herds of goats in the state to mitigate and remove over 1,000 acres worth of hard to reach, hazardous combustible fuels.

Understanding the year-round threat, the Oakland Fire Department is committed to working with neighbors and fire safety advocates to explore all strategies to prevent wildfires within our jurisdiction. Whether it's by ensuring we have adequate staffing, developing new regional partnerships, acquiring new equipment and apparatus, or through the piloting of new technology that may prevent the loss of properties and save lives. Early detection and suppression of fire is critical in the prevention of catastrophic wildfires. Acceptance of this grant aligns with the citywide priority to advance **holistic community safety**.

The use of goats in Oakland's high fire hazard severity zones has proven to be beneficial for wildlife habitat by controlling invasive plants, improving soil health, and reducing wildfire risk. Their grazing habits can enhance the quality and diversity of vegetation, making it more suitable for various wildlife species. In areas prone to wildfires, goats play a crucial role in reducing fuel load by grazing on dry vegetation. This can help create [fuel breaks](#), making it more difficult for fires to spread and potentially saving habitats from destruction.

This new grant funding will allow the Fire Department to expand the area which the goats typically graze each year, while saving the city money.

In May 2024, the Oakland City Council formally adopted a [10 year Vegetation Management Plan](#) (VMP).

Adoption of the Vegetation Management Plan (VMP), which outlines a framework for managing fuel loads and vegetation on City-owned properties and along roadways in the City's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ), is an actionable step to reduce the likelihood of a catastrophic wildfire, such as the 1991 Oakland Hills Fire.

The Council also certified the Environmental Impact Report, which provided formal approval to ensure that the City follows the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"). The Adopted Vegetation Management Plan and certified Environmental Impact Report can be found [here](#).

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suitable for various wildlife species. In areas prone to wildfires, goats play a crucial role in reducing fuel load by grazing on dry vegetation. This can help create [fuel breaks](#), making it more difficult for fires to spread and potentially saving habitats from destruction.

Failure to accept this grant funding would decrease the city's capacity to execute the goals of the goat grazing contract and limit our ability to mitigate fire risk along key roadsides and other city-owned parcels in the hills. The goat grazing work occurs between May and September each year.

FISCAL IMPACT

This \$107,275,000 grant requires matchings fund from the grantee. One hundred percent (100%) matching funds will be provided from OFD Vegetation Management funds originally budgeted for goat grazing in FY 2024-2025 and carried forward by encumbrance to FY 2025-2026.

Fund	1010 General Purposed Fund
Organization	20371 – Vegetation Management
Account	54911 – Services: Contract
Project	10048383 – Vegetation Management
Award	23496
Task	1010.PS23
Program	PS23 – Fire Prevention Bureau

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

The use of goats in the Oakland hills is viewed as a highly efficient, cost-effective way to manage dry, hazardous vegetation. The program has broad support from the community and key stakeholders which wrote letters of support for similar grants, and elected officials which voted to adopt the vegetation management plan.

COORDINATION

The Fire Department works in concert with the Oakland Public Works Department to manage fuel reduction projects on public land.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: Goats have proven to be a cost-effective way to reduce hazardous fuel, as the city can send them to locations that would be far too hazardous and costly to send OFD personnel.

Environmental: Goats are generally less harmful to wildlife than other methods of vegetation management, like herbicides or heavy machinery. They offer a more natural and sustainable approach to habitat restoration and maintenance

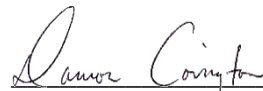
Race and Equity: There are no direct race or equity impacts to accepting this grant.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To: (A) Enter Into An Agreement With The California Firesafe Council To Accept Grant Funds In The Amount Of One Hundred Seven Thousand Two Hundred Seventy Five Dollars (\$107,275); (B) Appropriate And Administer Said Funds; And (C) Expend Grant Funds In Accordance With The City's Purchasing Requirements For The Purpose Of Fuel Mitigation And Goat Grazing Services

For questions regarding this report, please contact Dr. Shawn Jones, Oakland Fire Department, at SJones3@oaklandca.gov.

Respectfully submitted,



Damon Covington
Fire Chief, Oakland Fire Department

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