



CITY OF OAKLAND

AGENDA REPORT


TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Joe DeVries
Deputy City Administrator
and Chief Resilience Officer

SUBJECT: Regionwide Wildfire Prevention MOU

DATE: November 14, 2023

City Administrator Approval


Jestin Johnson (Dec 4, 2023 17:40 PST)

Date: Dec 4, 2023

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution Authorizing The City of Oakland To Enter Into A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Among Jurisdictions In The East Bay Hills To Form A Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group To Improve Regionwide Collaboration On Wildfire Mitigation Activities And To Reduce Wildfire Risk Throughout The East Bay Hills

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Oakland has been participating in the development of a regional Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to better coordinate wildfire prevention efforts across the East Bay. This work originally contemplated the formation of a Joint Powers Authority (JPA), but member agencies agreed to a less restrictive approach of creating an MOU (**Attachment A**). This MOU provides the legal structure for an intergovernmental collaboration, referred to as the “Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group” (WPCG). The MOU requires that the City of Oakland appoint one member and one alternate from its governing body to serve on the WPCG.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The series of historic wildfires throughout California and the Western United States in recent years demonstrates that the impacts of global climate change will continue to have potentially devastating local effects throughout the region; including habitat destruction, loss of life, economic impacts, infrastructural damage, and public health hazards associated with air quality. The spread of wildfire does not respect political or jurisdictional boundaries; burn areas and air quality impacts from smoke extend throughout the region. A large portion of the East Bay region, including the East Bay Hills from Hercules to Fremont are a CalFire designated high-risk danger zone. A more coordinated approach and investment in wildfire prevention and vegetation management will help to mitigate the number and severity of wildfire events. Regional coordination made possible by the legal structure of the MOU may prove both more

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effective and more efficient in developing and implementing best practices, as well as sharing expertise and other resources.

The East Bay Region contains more than twenty (20) municipalities, counties, and fire districts, including the City of Oakland, that may all benefit from a coordinated fire management approach. Several local jurisdictions, including the City of Oakland, the University of California at Berkeley, East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), the City of Berkeley, Contra Costa County, East Bay Municipal Utilities District, and the City of Orinda, have been involved in interagency fire prevention work for over three years coordinated by the Oakland City Administration, in particular around Grizzly Peak which winds through these jurisdictions. The cities of Berkeley, El Cerrito, Pinole, Kensington and Richmond, as well as Alameda County have passed similar resolutions in support of an MOU and are also in the process of seeking authorization from their governing bodies.

In 2019, Oakland City Council adopted [Resolution No. 87940 C.M.S.](#), which prioritized wildfire prevention in Oakland. In response, the City Administrator's Office created the Wildfire Prevention Working Group (WPWG) in 2020, which coordinates city departments and connects with neighboring jurisdictions on prevention efforts.

In 2021, the City Council adopted [Resolution No 88838 C.M.S.](#) encouraging the city to participate in discussions to create a regional Joint Powers Authority (JPA) regarding vegetation management. In the summer of 2022, member agencies agreed to work towards a MOU structure instead of a JPA for coordinated wildfire prevention efforts.

In July 2023, the City Council approved amending [Resolution No. 89857 C.M.S.](#) to add \$6,000 to the existing grant agreement with the Oakland Firesafe Council (OFSC) to contribute to the cost of managing the creation of the MOU. Several other jurisdictions also contributed, indicating strong support for the MOU.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

The creation of the MOU allows for a more coordinated approach and investment in wildfire prevention and vegetation management regionwide, which will help to mitigate the number and severity of wildfire events. Potential areas of collaboration for the WPCG include: developing and implementing joint plans to reduce flammable wildland vegetation and replace it with wildfire resistant vegetation where appropriate; partnering together to identify and apply for state, federal, or other grant funds to assist with regional wildfire risk mitigation activities; collaboration on local building and fire code updates; and planning together for wildfire evacuations and response, especially those that cross jurisdictional boundaries between one or more of the member agencies. Regional coordination may prove more effective and more efficient in developing and implementing best practices, as well as sharing expertise and other resources.

This effort meets the Citywide priorities of 1) holistic community safety, 2) housing, economic, and cultural stability, and 3) responsive trustworthy government by protecting high risk neighborhoods from wildfires in partnership with several neighboring jurisdictions.

FISCAL IMPACT

Entering into this MOU has no direct fiscal impact however, to the extent that regional coordination makes the East Bay more competitive for wildfire prevention grants, the collaboration could strengthen the City's access to additional funding.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

The City of Oakland is working with The Oakland Firesafe Council, a grassroots community-based organization dedicated to mobilizing the people of Oakland and Alameda County to reduce the risks of wildfire danger to people and property.

COORDINATION

The several meetings designed to develop this MOU included the participation of elected and administrative leaders from across Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. County Supervisors, Mayors, City Council Members, Fire Chiefs, and other emergency services and administrative staff participated in the drafting of the final document.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: In adopting this resolution, Oakland will participate in helping to mitigate the number and severity of wildfire events, which will reduce the potential disaster costs and economic impacts of these events.

Environmental: Mitigating the number and severity of wildfire events will protect Oakland's physical environment and infrastructure from damage. Additionally, the vegetation management efforts that are a central portion of these efforts often focus on removing invasive species and planting fire-resistant native species, which strengthens the native ecology in high fire severity hazard zones.

Race & Equity: This resolution will help ensure the safety of Oakland residents living in or near high wildfire risk zones. Additionally, in mitigating wildfires, frontline residents disproportionately affected by climate change will not be impacted by wildfire smoke as frequently or severely.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

- 1. Staff Recommends That The City Council Authorize The City of Oakland To Enter Into A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Among Jurisdictions In The East Bay Hills To Form A Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group To Improve Regionwide Collaboration On Wildfire Mitigation Activities And To Reduce Wildfire Risk Throughout The East Bay Hills;**

For questions regarding this report, please contact Joe DeVries, Deputy City Administrator, at (510) 238-3083.

Respectfully submitted,



Joe DeVries, Deputy City Administrator and
Chief Resilience Officer
City Administrator's Office

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Attachments (1):

A: *Wildfire Prevention Coordinating Group MOU*