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Proposal :: CA / Ventura Fire Safe

Submitted to CSS on Mar 14, 2025

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FY 2024 - 2025 USDA Forest Service Community Wildfire Defense Grant Application	File Name		
	State: CA	Keyword:	Ventura Fire Safe
	Region:	Priority:	Id:
	Administration Information		
	Funds Requested:	\$3,352,260	
	Match:	\$930,437	
	Score:	Ranking:	Project Funding:
			\$4,282,697

1	Proposal Cooperator [CA]			
	Cooperator Organization:	Central Ventura County Fire Safe Council, Inc.		
	Contact Person:	Stephen Watson		
	Address:	3585 Maple Street, Suite 205		
	City:	Ventura	State:	CA
	Phone:	805-746-7365	ZIP Code:	93003
	Email:	info@venturafiresafe.org		

1	Applicant Information [CA]			
	Applicant:	Central Ventura County Fire Safe Council, Inc.		
	Contact Person:	Stephen Watson		
	Address:	3585 Maple Street, Suite 205		
	City:	Ventura	State:	CA
	Phone (work/cell):	805-746-7365	Fax:	805-746-7365
	Email:	info@venturafiresafe.org		
	Federal Tax ID:	27-1527559	UEI:	ER6BRPS7MJG1

Is either the Applicant or Proposal Cooperator an Alaskan Native Corporation or an Indian Tribe (either federal or state recognized)?

Please answer either Yes or No

Is the Applicant an Alaskan Native Corporation or an Indian Tribe

No

2

Provide the expiration date for your sam.gov Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number registration. Note: The UEI# and an active sam.gov registration are needed to apply for the grant.

UEI # and Sam.gov Expiration Date

UEI: ER6BRPS7MJG1

Expiration: November 19, 2025

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4	Project Information	
	Name of the Project:	Community-Scale Wildfire Resilience in Ventura County
	Community Name(s):	Camarillo, Fillmore, Moorpark, Ojai, Piru, Santa Paula, Simi Valley, Thousand Oaks
	Counties:	Ventura
	Congressional District:	CA 26th

GIS Coordinates

Ref. Point Name: Ventura County

Lat/Long: 34.470008, -119.083323

Description: Project boundary is Ventura County, CA.

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Area Name:

Boundary Lat/Longs:

Description:

Provide a brief overview and purpose statement for the project, addressing the overall intent of this program to assist communities with planning and mitigating their risk against wildfire.

Brief Project Overview and Purpose

Research and recent disasters have shown that wildfire resilience requires a neighborhood-wide approach. Without cohesive, community-scale hardening efforts, a single vulnerable property can become the ignition point for devastating urban conflagrations when embercast from the first home causes a domino effect of ignitions. The Mountain Fire in Ventura County destroyed 182 structures and 56 outbuildings in this fashion, damaged/affected 93 structures. The risk to these 93 structures is still very high because the vegetation surrounding the homes was heated, dried out, and killed during the fire, without the fuel being fully removed. This poses a greater wildfire risk because the standing fuel is now dry and dead across many acres of semi-burnt barrancas and hillsides.

The state and Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD) are shifting regulations to require a noncombustible 5-foot zone around the home, also referred to as Zone 0. Zone 0 is most vulnerable to embers, as they accumulate in wildfires around the base of the home, gutters, and in any adjacent materials to the home (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/WF/WF22132>). Most home losses during wildfires are due to embers (<https://www.fire.ca.gov/dspace>). By removing all combustible materials from Zone 0, we can highly reduce the risk of embers igniting the home. However, new regulations will not result in homes implementing non-combustible Zone 0s overnight. Our goal with this project is to aid this transition.

The majority of parcels in Ventura County have combustible materials in their Zone 0s. Many residents are unclear on what a non-combustible Zone 0 means, with questions arising around the Executive Order N-18-25 from Governor Newsom (<https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/EO-Urban-Conflagration-N-18-25-Final.pdf>). While AB 3074, approved in 2020, first introduced the requirement of an ember-resistant zone within 5 feet of the structure, the EO N-18-25 created a deadline of December 31, 2025 for Board of Forestry to create enforcement procedure and roll-out (https://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200AB3074). VCFD announced that for all new builds, a non-combustible Zone 0 is required effective Feb. 21, 2025. VCFD is developing the timeline for this to be adopted with existing structures, but it is coming.

The project will reduce wildfire risk by first educating the public about Zone 0 requirements and addressing existing confusion. Next, we will train professional landscapers and contractors responsible for installing non-combustible Zone 0 areas. Next, we will expedite landscape plan permits and provide direct defensible space assistance in areas of significantly high risk. Lastly, we will incentivize communities not receiving direct defensible space assistance by providing free community-wide chipping services. This project will help ensure that neighborhoods not just isolated homes are better prepared to withstand the next wildfire.

Respond with the grant component type that applies to the application (please select only one per application):

1.) Creating or Updating a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) that is more than five (5) years old.

2.) Project described in a CWPP that is less than ten (10) years old. (See NOFO for CWPP alternative requirements such as Hazard Mitigation Plans)

Grant Component Type

Grant Component Type is #2) Project described in a CWPP that is less than ten (10) years old.

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For project implementations, an eligible CWPP or equivalent plan needs to be included.

Provide a link to the CWPP or if no link exists, please send a copy to the CWDG Forest Service email at SM.FS.usfs_cwdg@usda.gov. (Include the State/Island/Tribe, project name, and applicant information)

(Note: If the application is for a CWPP development or revision, a current CWPP is not required.)

Include an Eligible CWPP or Equivalent Plan

This grant includes several projects described in Ventura County's Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) which was recently updated in 2023 by the Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council (VRFSC)

LINK TO CWPP (Project pages and quotations described below in this section):
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/63idle81nggk4cs5ifuoi/Ventura-County-CWPP-Final-2023-signed.pdf?rlkey=eppam3sfghfi5ak75otvvaldz&e=1&dl=0>

This project has 4 main components which will be explained in further detail in the project description section: 1) targeted public education; 2) professional training for landscapers; 3) direct assistance with Zone 0-compliant landscaping; and 4) chipping services. Below you will find excerpts from the Priority Project List within the Ventura County CWPP that align with projects named in our Project Description:

TARGETED PUBLIC EDUCATION

1. Raise awareness about the risks and impacts of wildfires. 2. Empower community members to take proactive measures to protect their homes and properties. 3. Build a strong network of support and resources for wildfire prevention and response efforts. (Page 51)

A list of plants that can be used in a fuel modification zone that is within or adjacent to one of the following: (a) an ESHA [Environmentally Sensitive Habitat Area] or a buffer zone, or (b) the Santa Monica Mountains (M) overlay zone. The plant list will include fire-resistant, drought-tolerant native trees and landscaping (Page 53).

7 The VRFSC will maintain an active presence at community events to provide information about the VRFSC and partner led programs to increase public safety and preparedness for wildfire events (Page 53).

PROFESSIONAL TRAINING FOR LANDSCAPERS

VRFSC will create and maintain a list of landscaping and building contractors who have shown their understanding of and interest in using fire safe landscaping and construction in accordance with VCFD Standards and Guidelines (Page 55).

DIRECT ASSISTANCE WITH ZONE 0-COMPLIANT LANDSCAPING

Defensible space includes measures such as clearing dead vegetation, trimming trees, and removing flammable materials from around homes and other structures. This can help prevent the spread of fire from the surrounding vegetation to buildings, and reduce the intensity of the fire, making it easier for firefighters to contain (Page 55).

Promote VCFD [Defensible Space] Standards and Guidelines (Page 54).

Develop Vegetation Management Program for Qualifying Residents: The VRFSC will seek funding to develop a program providing defensible space vegetation management for qualifying elderly, disabled, and low-income residents (Page 56).

CHIPPING SERVICES

Curbside Community Chipper Events: The VRFSC, other local Fire Safe Councils, and local fire departments hold community chipper days to assist residents with disposal of large quantities of vegetative debris. Removing this hurdle for the public can incentivize proactive fuel reduction for whole neighborhoods (Page 56).

Please respond yes or no if the community is considered "at-risk" (please refer to the definition within the NOFO). Provide a web link to the verification source. (Note: At-Risk is a basic eligibility requirement of this grant opportunity. If the answer to this question is "no," do not proceed with the application process.)

Is Your Community Considered "At-Risk"

Yes. Ventura County, CA, is considered at risk. It has a higher Wildfire Hazard Potential than 97.9% of counties in the nation. (Source: Wildfire Risk to Communities, Version 2. 2024. As reported by the CWDG Data Tool, <https://wildfirerisk.org/cwdg-tool/6111>).

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Do you currently have, or will you adopt prior to grant award, an ordinance or regulation that requires that roofs for new building construction, as well as the reroofing or replacement of a roof on existing buildings, adheres to standards that are similar to, or more stringent than, the roof construction standards established by the National Fire Protection Association or applicable model building code established by the International Code Council (this is not a requirement for eligibility but determines the source of funds).

Roofing Code/Ordinance

Yes, All new buildings and roof replacements are required to meet the California State Building Code Chapter 7a for minimum Class A roof in Wildland-Urban Interface areas.

9

Are you planning on applying for a grant match waiver based on the project serving an underserved community? Please respond yes or no. If yes, include sufficient supporting documentation in your waiver request to demonstrate that the community meets the Low-Income criteria. In addition, Indian Tribes, Alaskan Native Corporations, Pacific Island Territories, and the US Virgin Islands.

Grant Waiver

1 No, Central Ventura County Fire Safe Council (DBA Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council) is not planning on applying for a grant
0 match waiver based on the project serving a low-income community. VRFSC is fortunate that its close partnership with the
 Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD) will more than meet the match requirement for this grant.

10 points. 7500 characters including spaces.

Clearly define the scope of the project, what the project proposes to accomplish, why it is important, and how it supports the Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy and relevant State Forest Action Plan (or equivalent Tribal plan).

Provide a comprehensive but succinct overview of the proposed project that includes basic details of who is doing what, where, and why this is important. Explain how the project is described in a CWPP (or acceptable alternative as described in the NOFO). Specify if benefits to traditionally underserved or marginalized audiences are a component of the work.

Project Description

This project has four main components which are explained further below: 1) targeted public education; 2) professional training for landscapers; 3) direct assistance via Zone 0-compliant landscaping; and 4) chipping services.

PROJECT COMPONENTS:

Firstly, this proposal will conduct targeted outreach in Ventura County, with an emphasis on those affected by the Mountain Fire where wildfire risk is still present. The Ventura County CWPP prioritizes projects related to community involvement and education starting on Page 51 and quoted in the Grant Component section. We, DBA/doing business as Ventura Regional Fire Safe Council (herein "VRFSC"), will lead this component in partnership with VCFD, working with municipalities to align objectives from planning and sustainability offices. This will build a strong network by educating staff on the science of home hardening and defensible space, raise awareness by collaboratively educating the public at Town Halls and virtual webinars, and empower community members by providing clear, actionable steps at these events. Offering instructions that can be scaled to peoples income level and physical ability is critical for engagement. Formats will include presentations and workshops on defensible space with a Zone 0 emphasis, neighborhood-level programs like Firewise USA, and home hardening. As stated in the CWPP, VRFSC will continue hosting booths at community events to provide resources and increase overall familiarity with wildfire safety (quotes from Page 53 of CWPP). VRFSC will expand its presence at community events by partnering with local schools to help prepare children, who will in turn take these lessons home to motivate their family in being more prepared. All Ventura County communities, including those indirectly impacted by the Mountain Fire will receive outreach and education. These efforts will include harder-to-reach areas like Saticoy, Somis, Santa Paula, and Oxnard, with expanded staffing to support these initiatives.

Meanwhile as it pertains to public education, VCFD will increase the scope of existing Community Wildfire Preparedness Program operations, previously known and referred to in the CWPP as the Fire Hazard Reduction Program (FHRP), wherein it is recommended to promote public understanding and adherence to this program (CWPP page 52). They will increase their scope by devoting staff to increase capacity for Firewise USA education and assistance. The demand for Firewise USA Risk Assessments has surged, adding to FHRP staffs workload. Increasing VCFD capacity in this manner will allow us to further meet the demands of the community and increase awareness which ultimately reduces wildfire risk when Firewise communities take action. Additionally, VCFD will coordinate and facilitate the beginning stages of developing an updated plant list as identified in the CWPP (page 53).

Californias Wildfire and Forest Resilience Action Plan (CA WFRAP): Key Action 2.15 guides us to provide education and assistance to homeowners to improve defensible space effectiveness, which directly aligns with our proposed target education and outreach, acknowledging that information is the first critical step for compliance and wildfire safety.

1 The second component is professional education, referenced on page 55 of the CWPP. This proposal seeks to do that by
1 providing training on fire safe landscaping, defensible space, and home hardening principles to professional contractors and
 landscapers with an emphasis on Zone 0 non-combustible zone. VRFSC will lead the development of the training with VCFD
 support. Once developed, VRFSC will hire contractors who are experienced in facilitating similar trainings. This is important
 because there is a knowledge gap about wildfire safe landscaping among contractors, which often leads to homes and
 landscapes being modified in a manner that continues to pose a significant risk. This aligns with Goal 2 of CA WFRAP:
 Strengthen Protection of Communities, Key Action 2.19, and Develop WUI Fire Safety Training Material.

Third, VRFSC and VCFD will provide direct assistance with landscape modifications to reduce wildfire risk of properties, prioritizing those within and around the Mountain Fire area that continue to pose a significant wildfire risk. This will be done by connecting homeowners with previously trained landscapers and contractors as well as covering a portion of the costs involved

with the planning and implementation of a non-combustible Zone 0 and defensible space. This is important because it will ensure the implementation of non-combustible and ember-resistant landscaping features in both the 0-5 and 5-30 foot zones, which aligns with the naming of defensible space as a category of priority actions in the CWPP, as well as the specific action: Promote VCFD [Defensible Space] Standards and Guidelines (54). VRFSCs Defensible-Space Assistance Program is described in the CWPP as a program providing defensible space vegetation management for qualifying elderly, disabled, and low-income residents (56). This proposal seeks funding for compliant landscape design and implementation for residents, prioritizing those within and adjacent to the Mountain Fire impacted area where wildfire risk is still present on their properties. VRFSC estimates assisting between 50-100 properties in this manner. By hiring an additional plan reviewer within VCFD to respond to the highly increased volume in permit applications, the issuance of permits during this time will be expedited and ensure greater defensible space compliance. This aligns with Goal 2 of CA WFRAP: Strengthen Protection of Communities, Key Action 2.13: Expand Assistance Programs. As those impacted by the Mountain Fire have been made more vulnerable due to the loss of assets, many people will need help to comply with defensible space requirements. Improved Defensible Space Compliance is Key Action 2.15.

Fourth, the CWPP lists the priority action of chipper events on page 56. VRFSC will plan, coordinate, facilitate, advertise, and host 30 events over 5 years. VCFD will provide on-site chipping for these events as long as their crews are available, with VRFSC permitted to hire other contractors if VCFD is unavailable. Recipients will include Mountain Fire-impacted communities and other at-risk communities within Ventura County. These events are important because by providing no-cost removal of trim med/removed vegetation, residents will be further encouraged to implement non-combustible and ember-resistant landscaping features in both the 0-5 and 5-30 foot zones. Chipper days are relevant for CA WFRAP: Key Action 2.15 because it provides a non-hazardous method of removing fuels. If fuels are left on properties even after vegetation is mowed or trimmed, the property is no safer nor is it compliant.

COHESIVE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY ALIGNMENT:

Two of the essential tenets of the Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy are to create fire-adapted communities and build a more streamlined and effective response to fire. This proposal will reinforce the first goal by reducing wildfire risk with implementation of non-combustible Zone 0 in a community devastated by fire as a model of a fire-adapted community, which will serve as a template for additional communities in the area. It reinforces the second goal by protecting structures and targeting landscape fuels, as entire neighborhoods with defensible space compliance act as a landscape.

1 2	Applicant Budget [CA]			
	Grant		Match	TOTAL
	Funds Requested	Applicant	Non-Federal Contributors	Total Project Cost
	Personnel / Labor:	\$918,057	\$275,021	\$1,193,078
	Fringe Benefits:	\$241,452		\$241,452
	Travel:	\$10,500		\$10,500
	Equipment:			
	Supplies:	\$9,000		\$9,000
	Contractual:	\$1,135,000		\$1,135,000
	Other:	\$601,000		\$655,416
Indirect Costs:	\$437,251		\$437,251	
TOTAL:	\$3,352,260	\$275,021	\$655,416	\$4,282,697

10 points. 5000 characters including spaces.

Provide any additional remarks needed to clarify your budget request. Clearly explain how the budget will be spent by line item, sources of match, and how expenditures are applicable and relevant to the goals and objectives of the project. The budget narrative must describe how the grant funds will be spent with specific detail for each grant expenditure. It must describe how expenditures are applicable and relevant to the goals and objectives of the project. A project proposal must also show how the applicant will meet matching requirements or qualify for a waiver.

If qualified for a waiver, you do not need to show funding in the match column. Information regarding matching funds will not impact scoring. Any program income generated during the award period must be accounted for by either: 1) reducing the federal share of the award, 2) using as program match, or 3) using as additive funds to do more work. Program income means gross income earned by the recipient or subrecipient that is directly generated by a supported activity or earned because of the federal award during the period of performance.

Budget Explanation

TOTAL BUDGET: \$3,352,260

PERSONNEL- \$918,057

\$127,560 Executive Director: Estimated 10 hrs/wk, for 4 yrs, on project oversight, reporting, and assisting with the high-level facilitation of project outcomes.

\$131,352 Programs Manager: Estimated 12 hrs/wk, for 4 yrs, overseeing and managing programmatic staff meetings for all outcomes.

\$92,835 Finance & Admin Manager: Estimated 10 hrs/wk, for 4 yrs, managing the budget, grant reporting, invoicing, processing invoices, accounts receivables, and accounts payable as well as managing Operations Assistant.

\$126,914 Head of Wildfire Safety: Estimated 13 hrs/wk, for 4 yrs, leading workshops, developing training curriculum, providing training sessions, coordinating with contractors and residents.

\$75,510 Operations Assistant: Estimated 12 hrs/wk, for 4 yrs, providing administrative and logistical support for all project components.

\$75,510 Program Assistant: Estimated 12 hrs/wk, for 4 yrs, supporting the Programs Manager in planning, execution, tracking of project activities, and reporting.

\$93,280 Wildfire Planning Specialist: Estimated 10 hrs/wk, for 4 yrs, planning and implementing wildfire mitigation efforts, conducting risk assessments, defensible space evaluations, and ensuring CWPP compliance while collaborating with VCFD and assisting with education.

\$72,776 Communications & Outreach Specialist: Estimated 8 hrs/wk, for 4 yrs, managing town halls, workshops, presentations, tabling events, web content, Zone 0 materials, and outreach flyers.

\$122,320 Fuels & Chipper Coordinator: Estimated 13 hrs/wk, for 4 yrs, facilitating and coordinating the chipper events with this project.

FRINGE BENEFITS- \$241,452

\$241,452: Benefits, Total benefits costs for VRFSC staff only for the percentage of time devoted to the project. Includes payroll taxes, workers comp, PTO, health, dental, and vision. Breakdown available upon request.

TRAVEL- \$10,500

\$10,500 Mileage: Mileage reimbursement for VRFSC staff, within Ventura County, based on the standard IRS mileage rate

SUPPLIES - \$9,000

\$5,000 Office Supplies: Includes pens, paper, binders, notepads, filing supplies, and other miscellaneous office supplies necessary for these projects.

1 \$4,000 Computers, Software, & Accessories: Includes 1-2 computer(s), software, accessories, and other technical tools deemed
3 necessary to complete the project.

CONTRACTUAL- \$1,135,000

\$15,000 Legal Assistance: Includes expenses for legal support with contract review, development, and other project-related matters, estimated at 30 hours based on previous lawyer fees of \$500/hr.

\$937,500 Landscape Assistance: Estimated roughly \$12,500 assistance provided to 50-100 residents (75 avg) for compliant landscape design and implementation. This may cover labor, materials, and other necessary expenses to facilitate defensible space compliance and landscape installation.

\$30,000 Landscaper Training Courses: Estimated at \$10,000 per training course, covering instructor fees, training materials, and other expenses to educate participants on proper wildfire protocols for the project.

\$120,000 Chipping Services: Estimated at \$4,000 per chipper event, covering contracted crew, chipper services, waste disposal, and other logistical expenses for 30 events. VCFD often donates their time for chipper events, but if they are unavailable, these funds ensure coverage.

\$20,000 Translation Services: Covers costs for live interpretation and document translation to ensure workshops and town halls are accessible to non-English-speaking community members.

\$12,500 Web Development: Covers costs for developing a virtual training page, including design, functionality, and content integration to support online workshops and educational resources.

OTHER- \$601,000

\$10,000 Venue Fees: Covers costs for event venue fees, necessary liability and event insurance.

\$15,000 Advertising, Marketing, Outreach: Covers printing, ads, banners, flyers, mailing, newspaper ads, educational materials, and other costs related to effectively reaching the communities outlined in the project narrative.

\$576,000 VCFD: Includes funding for additional VCFD personnel to assist with Firewise projects, landscape plan reviews, and enhancing wildfire preparedness efforts within the project scope.

INDIRECT- \$437,251

\$437,251 Indirect: Indirect expenses associated with the project, calculated at the de minimis indirect cost rate (15%).

MATCH- \$930,437

\$275,021 VRFSC: VRFSC staff time matched towards supporting and implementing chipping, Firewise activities, and educational components of the project.

\$655,416, Ventura County Fire Department: VCFD will be providing support throughout the entirety of this project, which includes attending planning meetings, workshops, assisting with the development and implementation of the trainings, Fire Hazard Reduction Program inspections (nearly 19,000 per year) which will include educational materials on Zone 0 and defensible space, and provide chipper and crew when able.

10 points. 7500 characters including spaces.

Clearly define how the project will be accomplished, including at least one of the quantitative accomplishment measures provided in the measurable outcomes table. Identify measurable outcomes and timelines (are the proposed activities clear and achievable, goals defined, outcomes measurable, # of acres treated, # of education/outreach programs, planning/assessment efforts clearly described, etc.). Include metrics for measuring progress towards the accomplishment(s). Describe any applicable less quantifiable return on investments.

Accomplishments

Below you will find the expected accomplishments for this project categorized based on the aforementioned measurable outcomes. These outcomes are reflected in the project description and will be listed here in a quantitative manner.

MEASURABLE OUTCOME: TRAINING IN MITIGATION PRACTICES (5)

- 1 Training curriculum for landscapers developed
- 2-5 Trainings (in-person) provided to 10-15 contractors based on curriculum developed
- 1 Web platform created with virtual version of the training

MEASURABLE OUTCOME: FIRE EDUCATION PRESENTATIONS (43)

- 8 Town Halls hosted
- 5 Educational presentations in partnership with schools
- 15 Wildfire preparedness workshops
- 15 Tabling events attended to provide resources to community members

MEASURABLE OUTCOME: PROPERTY INSPECTIONS/ASSESSMENTS (100)

- 100 defensible space / Zone 0 assessments from VRFSC assessors

MEASURABLE OUTCOME: IMPLEMENTATION OF WUI STRUCTURE/PARCEL/COMMUNITY FIRE HAZARD MITIGATION METHODOLOGY (HMM) FOR COMMUNITY HAZARD REDUCTION (325)

- 50-100 Residents impacted by the Mountain Fire resourced
- 50 Noncombustible Zone 0s created from the assistance provided
- 200 Residents impacted by the Mountain Fire provided list of trained contractors
- 30 Chipper events held throughout Ventura County

MEASURABLE OUTCOME: CREATING LOCAL/REGIONAL MITIGATION PARTNERSHIP OR COLLABORATIVE GROUPS (5)

- 5 Meetings/Agendas with Municipalities in and around the Mountain Fire impacted area

VCFD Qualitative Outcomes

- All plans/permits expedited for Mountain Fire recovery area
- Educational materials distributed to all FHRP inspected properties (approximately 19,000 properties reached annually)
- Firewise community development, risk assessments, etc.
- Process for developing updated plant list

PROJECT TIMELINE

YEAR 1:

Key staff are hired and onboarded in Q1 and Q2 of project start, and a contract is established with VCFD.

PUBLIC EDUCATION: VRFSC begins efforts with municipal meetings, workshops for Mountain Fire impacted communities, and planning for future town halls, while partnerships with schools are initiated. VRFSC coordinates communication with other partners involved in public education, including community-based organizations and local elected officials. VCFD assists with workshops and meetings by attending and providing insight. VCFD to hire staff for Firewise community assistance that provides support on the application process, Firewise workshops, risk assessments, and other aspects pertaining to Firewise community development.

- 1** **PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION:** VRFSC in partnership with VCFD begins developing training for contractors and landscapers and identifying key industry contacts. Once training is more developed, VRFSC will develop a web platform and/or webpage centered around this training and contractor list. VRFSC identifies and connects with instructors eligible for hosting and facilitating in-person trainings.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE: VRFSC begins to create the processes around providing direct assistance to residents, including applications and streamlined workflows, legal consultation for agreements and contracts, and outreach through pre-existing groups working with Mountain Fire Victims (such as the Long Term Disaster Recovery Group). VCFD hires plan reviewer to expedite planning/permitting process.

CHIPPING: VRFSC works to identify areas most suitable for these services, create a long-term calendar, and conduct initial events through other remaining funding sources before utilizing funding from this project.

YEAR 2:

PUBLIC EDUCATION: VRFSC begins hosting town halls, workshops, and tabling events to provide information and education on wildfire safety as it pertains to defensible space, Zone 0, and home hardening. Wide array of partners, including Assemblymembers, Board of Supervisors, and local nonprofits to assist in the outreach. Furthermore, VRFSC will continue to expand its Firewise USA community efforts through matching funds. VCFD continues Firewise USA community development as referenced in year 1.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: VRFSC in partnership with VCFD begins to host/offer facilitated training for landscapers and

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: VRFSC in partnership with VCFD begins to host/offer facilitated trainings for landscapers and contractors, and an initial contractor list is developed alongside web updates to provide to residents.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE: VRFSC continues to connect and coordinate residents who will be able to apply for assistance, to which VRFSC will connect residents with trained contractors for wildfire safe landscaping assistance to be provided. VCFD continues to review and expedite initial plans and permits.

CHIPPING: VRFSC efforts scale up with finalized event areas, partner collaboration, and community outreach, leading to fully implemented chipper events. VCFD to support chipper events as available.

YEAR 3:

PUBLIC EDUCATION: VRFSC continues offering town halls, workshops, and tabling events as depicted in previous years.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION: VRFSC and VCFD continue additional contractor training as needed, and the contractor list is updated.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE: VRFSC continues to work with approved residents who will receive continued support, with more landscape plans developed and implemented to create Zone 0 non-combustible landscaping with wildfire safety in mind.

CHIPPING: VRFSC continues to implement chipper events.

YEAR 4:

PUBLIC EDUCATION efforts continue with Town halls, workshops, and tabling events.

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION remains active with additional contractor trainings and ongoing list updates.

DIRECT ASSISTANCE efforts persist with landscape planning, approvals, and additional applicants receiving support.

CHIPPING events continue to be held.

YEAR 5:

All unfinished activities from Year 4 continue, with a focus on finalizing efforts, reporting outcomes, sharing lessons learned, and evaluating program effectiveness in an attempt to replicate this in other communities.

10 points. 7500 characters including spaces.

The application should clearly define collaborative elements, including support from partners, agencies, landowners, and communities. A project proposal must identify partners that will be actively engaged in carrying out the project and add value to project planning and implementation, with a description of each partner's role. Collaboration may be qualitative in nature, and the contribution of a partner may be more than the number of partners involved.

1.) Identify partners that have demonstrated a commitment and add value towards planning and carrying out the project.

2.) Describe what these partners and collaborators contribute.

3.) Demonstrate residual positive benefits as a result of collaboration related to capacity, skills, knowledge, infrastructure, or a replicable approach, among others.

Collaboration

Over the past decade, VRFSC has strived to build strong, lasting partnerships with agencies, community organizations, and local elected officials throughout Ventura County and neighboring counties. As a result, our reach has expanded significantly, allowing us to serve the entire county in a meaningful way. The Ventura County Board of Supervisors recognized this impact by naming VRFSC the official County Coordinator for wildfire preparedness. With organizations frequently seeking us out for collaboration on wildfire safety initiatives, we are in a prime position to leverage these relationships to ensure this project is streamlined, efficient, and highly successful.

This proposal represents a fully collaborative effort between VRFSC, countywide agencies such as the Ventura County Fire Department and Ventura County Board of Supervisors, regional nonprofit organizations such as the Long Term Disaster Recovery Group, Environmental Workforce Collaborative, Habitat for Humanity, American Red Cross, and private contractors to name a few. Each partnership will further a specific component of this project, and the referenced partners have already expressed a willingness and desire to work with VRFSC on this project.

The Ventura County Fire Department (VCFD) will serve as a subawardee on this grant, working in close partnership with VRFSC on nearly all aspects of the project as mentioned in the project description. Additionally, VCFD will provide crew(s) and a chipper for community chipping events, ensuring effective vegetation management and wildfire risk reduction.

- 1** The Long Term Disaster Recovery Group (LTRG) has been hosting monthly meetings with Mountain Fire victims, focusing on long-term recovery and support for those who lost their homes. Through this partnership, VRFSC will seamlessly coordinate and provide vital resources to affected residents and communities. Periodic workshops and presentations will further enhance these efforts, offering ongoing education and assistance.
- 5**

The Ventura County Board of Supervisors will support VRFSC by amplifying outreach efforts, lending credibility to the initiative, and assisting in expediting processes when possible. The Mountain Fire directly impacted Supervisor Jeff Gorells district, and both he and his staff have been highly engaged and supportive of VRFSCs wildfire preparedness work, a commitment that will continue throughout this project.

VRFSC has also connected with Habitat for Humanity, which brings extensive experience in construction, rebuilding, and community-based projects. They helped in the rebuild process in Paradise after the Camp Fire and their expertise will be instrumental in navigating the complexities of work done on properties as it pertains to Zone 0 and landscaping.

Additionally, VRFSC will collaborate with several nonprofits to enhance outreach and education efforts. The Farm Bureau of Ventura County will assist in reaching farmers affected by the Mountain Fire. The American Red Cross has already been providing wildfire education to schools and will continue to support these efforts. Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) will help engage indigenous communities that may have been impacted by the fire and are within the scope of this project. Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) will leverage its network of nonprofits and agencies to further support project implementation.

10 points. 7500 characters including spaces.

Clearly define the scale of the project, including relationships with past, present, or future projects that, when combined, offer more benefits than when taken individually. Describe the overall landscape and land ownership that the project influences in addition to the defined project area. Specify areas targeted for planning or mitigation. Clearly describe each proposed activity and include details on where they will be occurring. Include the approximate number of structures that will benefit from the proposed action.

Landscape Impacts

This proposal represents resilience efforts at a scale that will reduce wildland fire behavior and the way a wildland fire moves through the landscape. The aim is to make fires easier to extinguish and demand fewer firefighting resources to tackle the wildland fire problem. Each of the projects outlined will inhibit the spread of fire by reducing the fuel load between larger vegetation such as trees and chaparral. This will be accomplished by eliminating the grasses and forbes that are classified as light flashy fuels. This proposal is a collaborative project that partners with local Fire Departments, Ventura County Fire Department, Fire Safe Councils, HOAs, and Community Wildfire Prevention Groups to accomplish these ends.

VRFSC has significant experience implementing projects of a similar type and scope to this proposal. The most recent and noteworthy examples are VRFSCs role in the a current CAL FIRE grant that focuses on Firewise education, chipping events, and fuels treatment projects all throughout Ventura County. Additionally, last year VRFSC provided direct assistance with both defensible space and home hardening over the last few years to over 100 Ventura County residents. VRFSC played a crucial role in quarterly Collaborative meetings and regional Town Hall events during a project from 2022 through 2024.

1 In addition to government grants, VRFSC has experience working with private funders and NGOs. Presently, VRFSC is working on large projects funded through the Conejo Open Space Conservation Agency (COSCA), Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), Southern California Edison (SCE), Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF), and California Fire Foundation. For each of these projects, VRFSC has orchestrated every step of the grants life cycle from conception to implementation.

VRFSC also has significant experience working with local fire departments and partnering contractors to complete the precise kinds of fuels mitigation and chipper work described in this proposal. In 2022, VRFSC partnered with Team Rubicon, a nonprofit that matches veterans with disaster prevention and relief projects, to limb a swath of hazardous eucalyptus trees in a creek bed running through Santa Paula. In addition to limbing these trees, Team Rubicon cleared ground vegetation and chipped small trees and shrubs. The project took several days to complete, with VRFSC in charge of logistics and some costs. VRFSC has also conducted numerous chipper events over the years, typically in partnership with Ventura County Fire or Fillmore Fire.

By training 35 landscaping companies through in-person and virtual means, we expect those companies to enhance defensible space on at least 100 parcels throughout the county during the lifetime of this grant. We expect to educate 350 parcel owners through Town Halls, 400 through workshops, 1,200 through tabling events, and 300 parcel owners through Firewise community development specifically, and thus enhance the defensible space of those 1,950 parcels. Direct assistance and varied resources will be provided to 200 parcels within and around the Mountain Fire area. Ventura County Fire Department's Community Wildfire Preparedness department reaches 19,000 parcels on an annual basis. We expect to provide chipping services for 900 parcels. In total, this project will impact 22,150 parcels, not including the more qualitative outcomes we expect coming from partnerships with presentations at schools.

10 points. 7500 characters including spaces.

Clearly define how or if the project will sustain itself after the grant period is over. Describe any plans or steps that will be taken to continue the project benefits beyond the life of the grant as well as who or what organizations are responsible.

Project Sustainability

This proposal is designed with sustainability in mind, particularly given the overarching goal of creating a community that has not just recovered from a significant wildfire event but has also fully prepared for the next fire. In this way, the residents served by this proposal will be able to lead neighboring communities throughout Ventura County, creating a ripple effect of fire-hardened communities in the region. A major focus of this proposal is developing fire resilient landscapes; which will continue to be developed long after grant funding has ended. Additionally, training contractors and landscapers, as well as creating a list of qualified providers in these fields will continue to serve at-risk community members long after this project has been concluded. Furthermore, these contractors and landscapers not only serve Ventura County but neighboring ones as well. This will be

extremely important given the recent, devastating fires in LA County.

This project prioritizes long-term sustainability by addressing wildfire resilience at the earliest and most cost-effective stage while a community is recovering from a wildfire. While there are many homes being rebuilt that will be in compliance, there are a large number of properties in this area whose landscaping still pose a significant risk. By assisting these residents now, we eliminate the need for costly adjustments to landscaping and home hardening later, ultimately saving both time and money. Thoughtfully designed landscapes with fire-resilient, low-maintenance vegetation ensure that communities remain prepared without as much of a need for continuous upkeep. It is no secret that post-wildfire recovery efforts, including rebuilding homes and infrastructure, place an enormous financial strain on both residents and local governments. Investing in preparedness is not only the most fiscally responsible approach but also the most effective way to safeguard lives both of residents and the firefighters who protect them. Unlike large-scale fuel reduction efforts that require ongoing intervention, this project fosters a self-sustaining, fire-adapted community that remains resilient without as much perpetual maintenance, ensuring long-lasting wildfire risk reduction.

VRFS's role as the leading Countywide resource in wildfire safety education has been recognized not just by community members and partner organizations, but funders as well. Since the expansion of VRFS's home hardening program in 2021, the organization has secured no fewer than five significant grants in support of this project, including funding to assist homeowners in adopting fire-safe retrofits, boost mailing campaigns, and conducting complementary chipper events. VRFS has demonstrated through the acquisition of these grants that the organization possesses the institutional capacity and credibility to back up large-scale projects with sustaining funds. VRFS has every intention of continuing this work with respect to this proposal. Furthermore, VRFS's Board of Directors are committed to supporting the programs outlined in this project, as these programs are in direct alignment with VRFS's mission. Both VRFS's Board and Staff understand that these programs are long-term, and plan to fundraise accordingly.

10 points. 3000 characters including spaces.

Does this project benefit a low-income community as defined in the NOFO? To receive priority points the application must clearly demonstrate and document whether the project benefits a low-income community, as defined.

Please respond yes or no. Provide a description and web link to the verification source.

Does this Project Benefit a Low-Income Community

Ventura County, CA, does not meet the "low income" criteria. The Census Bureau estimates its median household income is between \$100,613 and \$103,669. To qualify in California, the low-end of the estimate must be less than \$73,302. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). American Community Survey. Washington, DC. As reported by the CWDG Data Tool, <https://wildfirerisk.org/cwdg-tool/6111>)

While Ventura County as a whole does not meet the "low income" criteria, there are several communities within Ventura County that ARE low-income per the Scoring Tool. The following communities will be recipients of services provided through this grant.

1 Santa Paula, CA, meets the "low income" criteria. The Census Bureau estimates its median household income is between \$68,646 and \$75,382. To qualify in California, the low-end of the estimate must be less than \$73,302. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). American Community Survey. Washington, DC. As reported by the CWDG Data Tool, <https://wildfirerisk.org/cwdg-tool/600070042>)

Fillmore, CA, meets the "low income" criteria. The Census Bureau estimates its median household income is between \$71,824 and \$98,686. To qualify in California, the low-end of the estimate must be less than \$73,302. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). American Community Survey. Washington, DC. As reported by the CWDG Data Tool, <https://wildfirerisk.org/cwdg-tool/600024092>)

Piru, CA, meets the "low income" criteria. The Census Bureau estimates its median household income is between \$63,140 and \$97,486. To qualify in California, the low-end of the estimate must be less than \$73,302. (Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022). American Community Survey. Washington, DC. As reported by the CWDG Data Tool, <https://wildfirerisk.org/cwdg-tool/600057372>)

10 points. 3000 characters including spaces.

Has all or part of the project area been impacted by a severe disaster that impacts wildfire risk and/or hazard?

Please respond yes or no. Provide a web link to the verification source.

Has this Community Been Impacted by a Severe Disaster: Part 1

Yes.

Details described in part 2 with links but we will also included here as mentioned in the instructions.

1
9 <https://wildfirerisk.org/cwdg-tool/6111>

Severe Winter Storms in 2023: DR-4699-CA <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4699>

Severe Winter Storms in 2024: DR-4769-CA <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4769>

Mountain Fire: FM-5545-CA <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/5545>

Severe Drought (multivear): <https://www.aov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/10.19.21-Drought-SOE-1.pdf>

If yes, in order to receive priority points the application must clearly demonstrate and document whether the project benefits a community that has been impacted by a severe disaster within the previous ten (10) years, and clearly exhibit how the severe disaster increased wildfire risk and/or hazard and was of a scale and scope to have had landscape impacts (please see full definition in the NOFO). Note: simply listing a disaster will not suffice; you must explain how this disaster has impacted the community's wildfire risk and hazard (not all disasters will qualify for points if it cannot be shown they have influenced the community's risk or hazard).

Has this Community Been Impacted by a Severe Disaster: Part 2

Ventura County experienced severe drought between 2011-2019 and was included in the Proclamation of a State of Emergency by Governor Newsom on October 19, 2021 (<https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/10.19.21-Drought-SOE-1.pdf>). This prolonged drought increased wildfire risk by drying out all and killing some vegetation, which heightens ignition potential and leads to increased rates of spread of wildfire. Wildfires in hot, dry conditions are more difficult to suppress due to rapid rates of spread, increased fire severity, and scarcity of water resources.

2
0 Volatile weather patterns resulted in heavy storms in December 2022-March 2023. The resulting extreme flooding prompted the Governor to declare an additional State of Emergency in Ventura County, as areas that typically experience under 10 inches of rain per year were pounded by 15 inches of rain in under 30 days (<https://www.vcemergency.com/la-conchita-rainfall-information>), corresponding to multiple FEMA-identified disasters: DR-4683-CA Severe Winter Storms, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides; EM-3591-CA California Severe Winter Storms, Flooding, and Mudslides; DR-4769-CA California Severe Winter Storms, Tornadoes, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides; and DR-4699-CA California Severe Winter Storms, Straight-line Winds, Flooding, Landslides, and Mudslides. These winter storms, tornadoes, flooding, landslides, and mudslides resulted in an abundance of dead and downed vegetation throughout rivers, creeks, arroyos, and barrancas countywide. Ventura Countys arroyos already pose a wildfire risk due to their live vegetation wildfire hazard potential, and the addition of snags and dead branches compound the wildfire risk by adding highly flammable material.

In addition to debris flow caused by flooding, the heavy rainfall creates additional risk. Still correlated to all aforementioned FEMA SIDs, the 2022-23 water year resulted in 201.7% of the normal rainfall total (average across 22 Ventura County sites: <https://www.vcwatershed.net/fws/reports/rain-season-report>). Live fuel moisture remained well above the historical average for most of 2023, with these

Storms leading to substantial vegetation growth and increase in fuel density all across Ventura County, especially of invasive flashy fuels. Research has shown that heavy rainy seasons result in excessive fuel loads, leading to greater wildfire risk [<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6040867/heavy-spring-rain-has-boosted-fuel-loads-ahead-of-fire-season/>, <https://www.hppr.org/hppr-environment/2017-02-28/last-years-rains-bring-Increased-fire-risk-in-2017>].

Many severe disasters named in the Scoring Tool are wildfires. While previous wildfires do not always increase future wildfire risk because specific fuel beds have been treated by the wildfire itself, the pattern of increasing frequency of wildfires in scattered locations throughout Ventura County show that Ventura Countys overall wildfire risk is increasing due to increased

10 points. 3000 characters including spaces.

To receive priority points the application must clearly demonstrate and document whether the project is located in an area identified as having high or very high wildfire hazard potential as defined by a local, state, Tribal, regional, or national wildfire hazard potential assessment.

Please respond yes or no, and provide a description and web link to the verification source.

Does the Project Location have Wildfire Hazard Potential

Federal: Yes. Ventura County, CA, meets the "wildfire hazard potential" criteria and has a higher wildfire hazard potential than 97.9% of counties in the nation. (Source: Wildfire Risk to Communities, Version 2. 2024. As reported by the CWDG Data Tool, <https://wildfirerisk.org/cwdg-tool/6111>)

2
1 State: The Board of Forestry and Fire Protection has listed Ventura County Fire Protection District on its 2024 Fire Risk Reduction Community List. The Fire Risk Reduction Community List, as mandated by PRC 4290.1, is "a list of local agencies located in a state responsibility area or a very high fire hazard severity zone...that meet best practices for local fire planning." Furthermore, the states (CAL FIREs) assessment of risk through the 2022 updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) maps indicate that Ventura County contains 340,936 acres of Very High FHSZ and 12,493 acres of High FHSZ in State Responsibility Area (SRA) alone. The Very High FHSZ accounts for 96% of Ventura Countys SRA, and has increased by 20.5% since the last update of the FHSZ maps in 2007.

