

**CITY OF TEMECULA
AGENDA REPORT**

TO: City Manager/City Council

FROM: Luke Watson, Deputy City Manager

DATE: April 8, 2025

SUBJECT: Receive Updated Presentation Regarding Wildfire Mitigation Efforts and Provide General Direction Regarding the Same (At the Request of Council Member Rahn)

PREPARED BY: Luke Watson, Deputy City Manager

RECOMMENDATION: That the City Council receive an updated presentation regarding wildfire mitigation efforts and provide general direction regarding the same.

BACKGROUND: On March 11, 2025, City staff provided the City Council a comprehensive overview of local wildfire mitigation efforts underway and planned in and around the City of Temecula. Upon receipt of the presentation, the City Council provided direction to staff to develop a draft work plan and cost estimate for the following wildfire mitigation items:

1. Caltrans vegetation clearance under the I-15 freeway at the confluence of Temecula and Murrieta creeks
2. Full implementation of the existing Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)
3. Citywide Community Wildfire Protection Plan
4. Community Wildfire Outreach and Education
 - Fire Wise Program
 - Fire Safe Council
 - Collaboration with Homeowner's Associations
 - Provide Community Home Hardening Recommendations
 - Annual Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Day Event
5. Evacuation Planning
6. Explore Funding and Support an Emergency Operations Center

Work Plan Item Description, Cost Estimate & Timing:

1. Caltrans vegetation clearance under the I-15 freeway at the confluence of Temecula and Murrieta creeks:

Description: Environmental is finalizing and Caltrans anticipates receipt of the ENV document by end of this month.

- Contractor is being mobilized 3rd week of April (04/14/25) based on availability. Due to recent storms, there is currently a moderate amount of water flowing in the creek, which should subside by start of work.
- Clearance measures and additional notes will be discussed between Caltrans VMP and contractor prior to start of work.
- Temecula creek is a wildlife crossing and caution needs to be taken to not remove more vegetation than is necessary:
- Some of the larger trees act as sound buffers the assist wildlife crossing under the bridge.
- Emphasis should be taken more to remove dead material and invasive plants (pampus grass, non-native grasses, tamarisk, etc.).
- Poison oak is present within the creek.
- A biological monitor is encouraged to be present considering the sensitive riparian area.

Cost Estimate: No cost to City. Project Funded by Caltrans

Timing: Caltrans anticipates work to begin mid-April

2. Full implementation of the existing Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP):

Description: A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a community-based plan that focuses on identifying and addressing local hazards and risks from wildfire. These plans are authorized and defined by the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA). The goal of a CWPP is to define and identify a community's priorities for the protection of life, property, shared assets, and infrastructure in the event of a wildfire. CWPPs represent the best opportunity to address the challenges of the wildland-urban interface (WUI) with comprehensive and locally supported solutions.

Currently the City has an approved CWPP for the confluence area of Temecula and Murrieta Creeks, extending eastward in Temecula Creek to roughly ½ mile past Pechanga Parkway. A significant portion of the implementation of this plan has taken place with Riverside County Flood Control completing a vegetation removal project withing Temecula Creek. Additionally, when Caltrans completes the anticipated vegetation removal project under the I-15 freeway, another major implementation component of the CWPP will have been completed. City staff has been communicating with the Pechanga Tribe regarding the portion of the CWPP area that is on their

lands. Tribal staff is working through their internal process to gain approval for vegetation clearance on their property.

Cost: To complete the implementation of the CWPP (not including the Pechanga Tribal land portion) it is estimated to be between \$300,000-\$500,000. Some of those cost could be paid by Riverside County Flood Control District as they continue with further vegetation clearance projects in Temecula Creek. The rest of the cost would be the City's responsibility.

Timing: Currently underway

3. City-wide Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Description: As previously mentioned, A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is a community-based plan that focuses on identifying and addressing local hazards and risks from wildfire. These plans are authorized and defined by the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA). The goal of a CWPP is to define and identify a community's priorities for the protection of life, property, shared assets, and infrastructure in the event of a wildfire. CWPPs represent the best opportunity to address the challenges of the wildland-urban interface (WUI) with comprehensive and locally supported solutions.

The City's current CWPP only covers the confluence area of Temecula and Murrieta Creeks, extending eastward in Temecula Creek to roughly ½ mile past Pechanga Parkway. To fund the development of a City-wide CWPP the City would apply for different grant opportunities that are available.

Cost: \$500,000-\$1 million. Competitive grant funding opportunities are available.

Timing: 1-2 years, including developing and submitting grant application, grant awards process and plan development.

4. Community Wildfire Outreach and Education

Description: A community wildfire outreach and education program could take many forms. Some of the work plan items, including collaboration with HOA's, becoming a Firewise Community, providing home hardening recommendations, forming a fire safe council, holding a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) day event, and implementing a One Tree program would be included in a comprehensive outreach and education program. Additional outreach and education could include collaboration with the Temecula Valley Unified School District, the Temecula Chamber of Commerce, and the business community at large.

Cost: Each outreach and education program component described above would have its own cost figure. Much of the outreach and education program cost would be City staff time.

Timing: Outreach and education components such as, providing home hardening information, collaboration with HOAs, and School District and the business community could start immediately. Becoming a Firewise community, standing up a fire safety council and holding a WUI day event and implementing a One Tree program would take some time to develop and implement, including the pursuit of grant funding.

5. Evacuation Planning

Description: Evacuation planning is the process of developing and actionable plan to ensure orderly evacuation of an area of the City or the entire City. It can also include planning for a nearby area being evacuated into the City. The City Emergency Management division is currently working on a comprehensive community evacuation plan.

Cost: Grant funded.

Timing: 6 months

6. Explore Cost of Emergency Operations Center

Description: An Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is a central command and control facility responsible for carrying out the principles of emergency response, emergency preparedness, emergency management, and disaster management functions at a strategic level during an emergency. The EOC ensures the continuation of operation of a municipality, company, public or emergency service, or other organization. The EOC is the centralized location of emergency response and recovery support operations during incidents. It provides space for centralized monitoring, control, and command of an emergency event.

There are several components to consider when developing, funding, and operating a new Emergency Operations Center (EOC). These critical components must be considered to ensure and EOC's effectiveness in managing crises and coordinating emergency response efforts.

These components include:

1. Facility Design & Infrastructure

- **Location & Accessibility:** The EOC should be in a secure, strategically located area, preferably resistant to natural and man-made hazards.

- **Structural Resilience:** The building must be designed to withstand disasters, including earthquakes, floods, and extreme weather.
- **Redundant Power & Utilities:** Backup generators, uninterruptible power supplies (UPS), and redundant communication lines are essential for continuous operation.
- **Space Planning:** Adequate room for workstations, conference areas, briefing rooms, and rest areas is necessary to support prolonged operations.

2. Technology & Communications

- **Interoperable Communication Systems:** The EOC must integrate with local, state, and federal emergency response agencies, ensuring seamless communication via radio, phone, and digital networks.
- **Emergency Alert & Notification Systems:** Integration with public warning systems (e.g., sirens, mobile alerts, social media) is crucial.
- **Data & Cybersecurity:** Protection against cyber threats and robust data storage solutions are necessary for safeguarding critical information.
- **GIS & Mapping Capabilities:** Geographic Information Systems (GIS) help with real-time situational awareness, resource allocation, and response planning.

3. Personnel & Training

- **Staffing Plan:** The EOC should have designated roles, including emergency managers, communication specialists, logistics coordinators, and liaisons with public safety agencies.
- **Training & Exercises:** Regular drills, tabletop exercises, and scenario-based training ensure personnel are prepared for real emergencies.
- **Mutual Aid & Coordination:** Pre-established agreements with neighboring municipalities and private entities can enhance resource-sharing and response efficiency.

4. Operational Framework & Policies

- **Incident Command System (ICS):** The EOC should operate under a standardized framework like the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to streamline emergency response coordination.
- **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** Clear protocols must define roles, responsibilities, and response actions during various emergency scenarios.

- 24/7 Readiness: The center must have a plan for activation, including staffing shifts, resource mobilization, and decision-making hierarchies.

5. Funding & Budgeting

- Initial Capital Investment: Funding sources must be identified for land acquisition, construction, and infrastructure development. Possible funding options include federal and state grants (e.g., FEMA, DHS), municipal budgets, and private-sector partnerships.
- Operational Costs: Recurring expenses, including salaries, maintenance, technology upgrades, and utility costs, must be planned for sustainable operation.
- Grant Management & Compliance: The municipality must ensure compliance with funding requirements and reporting obligations if external funding is used.

Cost: Development costs dependent on many variables including, whether land and/or a building need to be purchased or built, technological requirements, and successful acquisition of grant funding. Operating costs would be dependent on staffing levels and other re-occurring costs of operating. In researching the costs to build and operate an EOC it appears that costs for a mid-sized City like Temecula would be in the range of \$10-\$75 million.

Timing: unknown

FISCAL IMPACT: While each component described above does or would have a fiscal impact, there is no direct fiscal impact of this agenda item as the Council direction was to develop a work plan and identify the estimated cost and timing of each individual component. There is no current request for funding of any of the components of this work plan.

ATTACHMENTS: None