Free Help to Protect Your Property

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) has awarded nearly $100,000 from its 2015-2016 State Responsibility Area Fire Prevention Fund (SRAFPF) Grant Program for the **Yosemite West Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project**. YWPHI is collaborating with its fiscal sponsor, the Yosemite/Sequoia Resource Conservation and Development Council in North Fork, to address the risk and potential impacts of wildfire to habitable structures in Yosemite West by mitigating the high tree mortality caused by the current drought-related bark beetle infestations plaguing the Sierra Nevada.

View looking north from Henness Ridge Road toward the Merced Canyon below Yosemite West (3/4/2016).

Current Status: Where Yosemite West Is At

In February 2016, the project conducted a street-view survey of each of the 294 parcels in Yosemite West, 159 of which are built parcels. The survey estimated the number of dead and dying trees, the need to reduce the number of trees ("stems") per parcel, and the need to improve defensible space on built parcels in accordance with CAL FIRE guidelines. Here is an overview compared with the project goals, which shows Yosemite West has a tremendous need for immediate fuel reduction; basically half of all parcels have dead or dying trees, poor tree health and/or inadequate defensible space.

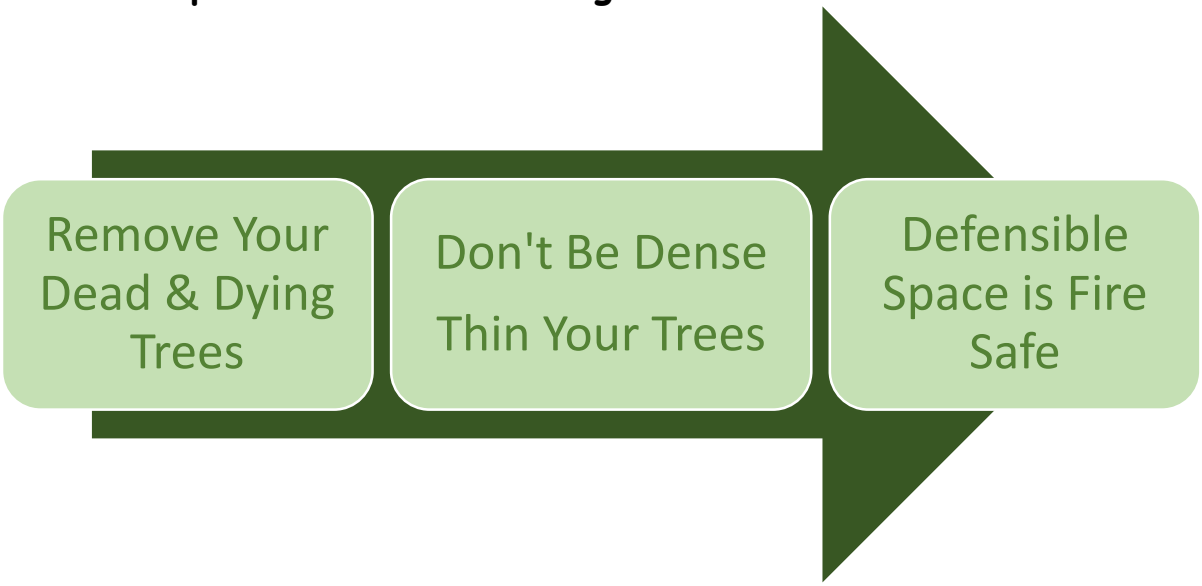
Steps	Description	Project Goals	Present Needs
Tree Mortality	# dead / dying trees to fell	200 trees	574 trees 173 parcels (59%)
Stem Density	# parcels to reduce density	90 parcels (30%)	136 parcels (46%)
Defensible Space (built parcels only)	# parcels to improve	40 parcels (25%)	78 parcels (49%)

2016 Yosemite West Hazardous Fuel Reduction Project

Meeting the Project Goals Yields these Project Outcomes:

- reduce the risk of crown fires;
- reduce wildfire intensity and rate of spread;
- increase compliance of all habitable structures with the 100-foot defensible space law, PRC§4291;
- improve forest health and resilience to beetle infestation;
- provide safer ingress and egress of roads for evacuating residents and responding emergency personnel since Yosemite West has only one road for ingress and egress; and
- protect the community water tanks, pump stations and the water control system necessary for fire protection.

The 3 Steps for Successful Mitigation are:



Step 1 - Address Tree Mortality

In our area and elevation in the Central Sierra, current tree mortality is between 54% and 72%. In California, bark beetles are killing millions of trees that become fuel for wildfire. Standing dead trees are not only a fire hazard, but they will eventually fall – maybe on your house, your neighbor's house, or on a person. In Yosemite West, tree mortality surveys show an alarming and continuing increase. Tree death is affecting large firs (70%) and pines (30%), the majority of which are between 18" dbh and 24" dbh.

As of 2010 there were no dead trees in Yosemite West; any dead trees up to that date were felled, limbed and chipped using funds from previous grants. As the four-year drought progressed, tree mortality in Yosemite West accelerated. Through a 2015 PG&E-funded grant project, Yosemite West felled 140 more dead trees. Even though this effort was successful and very cost effective, trees are continuing to die at a rapid pace. At present, there are almost 600 more dead and dying trees near habitable structures.

The project will fell dead and dying trees, limb felled trees, and chip / disburse chips on site. Logs will be sectioned and left flat on the ground on site.

Step 2 – Decrease Stem Density

The current forest surrounding Yosemite West has up to 1,000 tree stems per acre. In natural conditions, there would be only 100 to 200 stems per acre, reducing to only 50 large trees per acre (or approximately 16 per parcel based on the average parcel size of 0.37 acres). A handful of parcels in Yosemite West even have particularly high tree density in close proximity to structures, in some cases as many as 40 trees within 30 feet! A more appropriate number would be between 4 and 8 trees, depending on the slope and nature of the parcel.

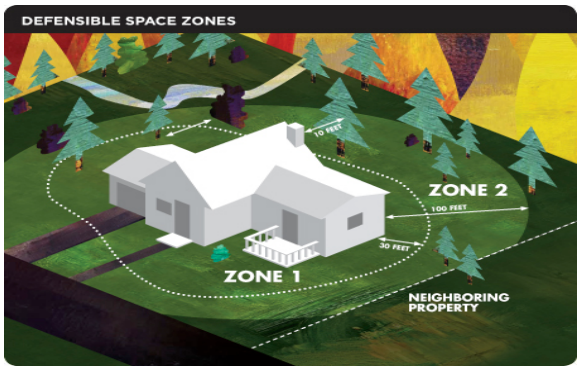
Today's stands are dominated by cluttered understory and extremely unhealthy densities. Thinning the understory and thinning trees to a wide spacing is the best long-term solution to better withstand wildfire, increase tree health and vigor, and reduce the likelihood of beetle attacks. Thinning can also hamper the bark beetle pheromone communication system that facilitates mass attacks. With expert forestry input from a Registered Professional Forester (RPF), the project will thin stands and address the imbalance of certain species. The project will chip debris and disburse chips on site.

The project will also reduce ladder fuels, clear vegetation in critical locations to protect vital water infrastructure, reduce vegetation and stem density adjacent to roads, and reduce fuel loading in potential evacuation staging areas and around critical fire hydrants.

Step 3 – Create Defensible Space: It's the Law!

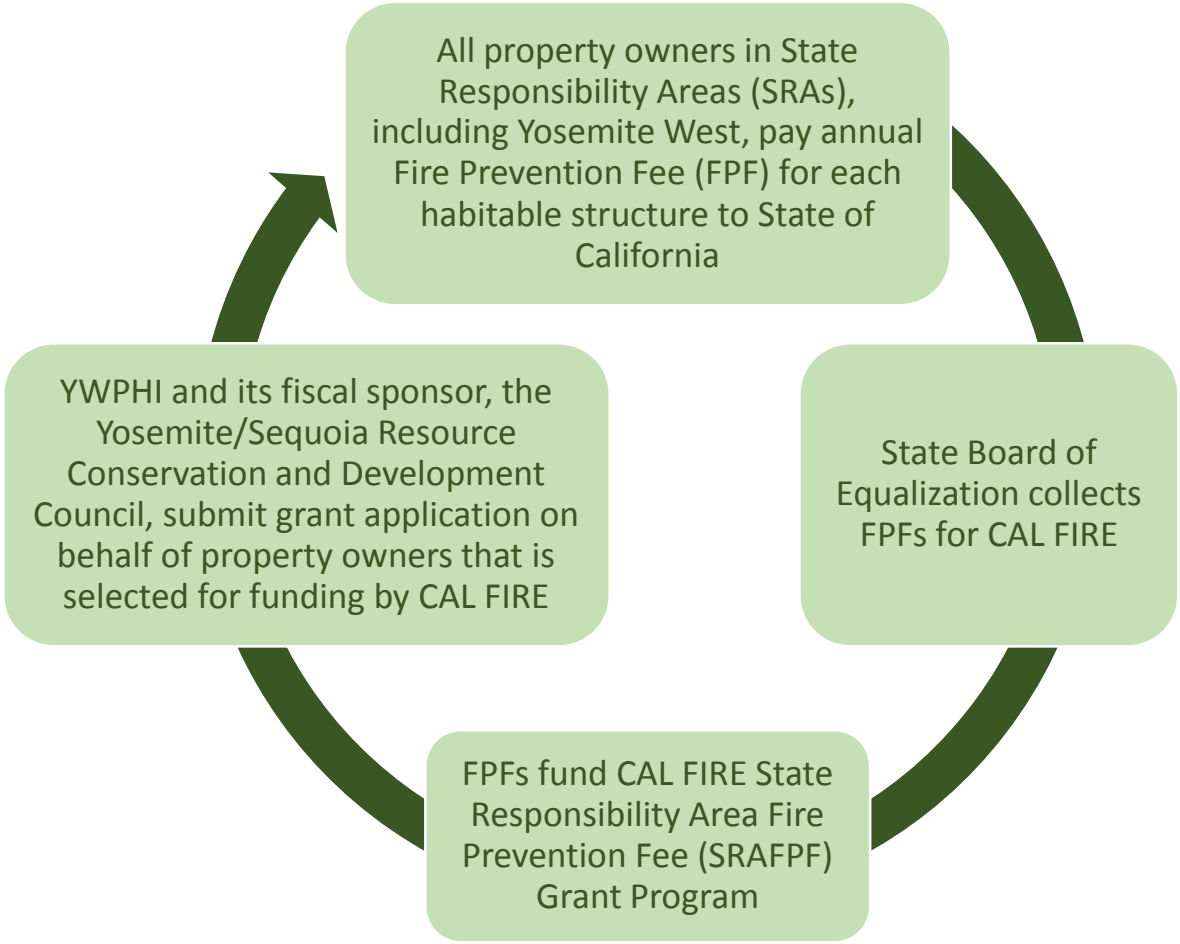
Defensible space is the legal responsibility of property owners and State law mandates property owners have 100 feet of defensible space around their structures. In Zone 1 within 30 feet of structures, the goal is to reduce the height of shrubs such as manzanita to no more than 18", remove limbs overhanging driveways and parking areas to a height of 15 feet, remove vegetation within 10" of propane tanks, remove ladder fuels less than 8 inches dbh (diameter at breast height) and remove tree clusters so single specimens remain. Property owners are strongly encouraged to remove *any* trees growing through decks and elevated walkways. In Zone 2 up to 100 feet, the goal is to continue removing ladder fuels less than 8 inches dbh and increasing the vertical and horizontal spacing of trees and limbs.

The project will identify problem areas that property owners need to improve in order to comply with PRC§4291 and will offer free curbside chipping to property owners who cut and pile their own debris.



Your Cost, $0

The project is free to all property owners in Yosemite West – that's right, no cost, zero, zilch, nada. Here's how the grant program is funded:



While there is no cost to participate in the project, the project will ask for community participation at project related meetings (held in conjunction with YWPHI's annual Memorial Day weekend picnic and annual meeting on Labor Day weekend) and for volunteers at future "work parties."

FAQs

How do we know if we have dead or dying trees and what types of fuel reduction need to be done on our property?

Every property owner will receive a customized ***Property Profile*** so you can clearly see if you have tree mortality, need stem density work and/or better defensible space, and what overall treatment is advisable for your property.

We have dead trees and need help. How and when do we sign up?
Read your customized ***Property Profile***, and complete and submit the ***Letter of Commitment*** by May 15, 2016.

Won't the brown trees come back because we received precipitation this season?
No, the trees will not come back to life and the weakened trees must be cut down to reduce the risk of wildfire and of their falling on structures and/or people.

Our trees are still green, so aren't they fine and we don't need to participate in this project?
No, just because a tree is still green, it doesn't mean it is not infected and won't die. You need to sign up because the die-off is continuing. Once bark beetles have successfully attacked a tree there is generally nothing you can do to save it. The project will consult with a RPF on issues of dying trees.

How does felling dead trees affect the spread of beetles?
Bark beetles infect healthy green trees. Once a tree is dead and brown, the beetles are gone. Thinning live trees and reducing stem density is the best way to ensure healthy trees have enough water and nutrients to resist future beetle attacks.

What do we do with the logs left behind?
A felled log flat on the ground is not a fire danger, but a standing dead tree is. The project's scope does not include funding to remove logs. As a property owner, you own the timber, so it is up to you to decide what to do with it. A Licensed Timber Operator (LTO) can remove the logs for you, possibly at no cost if they have a market for the timber, by filing a ***Drought Mortality Exemption CCR 14§ 1038(k)*** with CAL FIRE. If you are interested, you should discuss this with a LTO.

Who will do the fuel reduction?
The project has contracted with a Registered Professional Forester and professional sawyers and crews all of who have liability insurance.

When will the fuel reduction be done?
The project is planning to fell as many dead trees as possible before the start of the 2016 fire season. Cleanup and chipping will follow. More felling and stem density work will resume in late fall 2016.

If we already participated in defensible space projects before, do we have to sign up again?
Yes, while the community achieved almost 75% participation in previous defensible space projects and annual community chipping programs, every parcel needs to do more and the community needs to increase its continuity of defensible space. Previous fuel reduction projects in Yosemite West removed ladder fuels less than 6" dbh, but property owners need increase that to 8" dbh.

New construction is continuing in Yosemite West (45% of the parcels remain unbuilt as of 2016) and unfortunately many of the newly built habitable structures do <u>not</u> have adequate defensible space even though they may have occupancy permits.

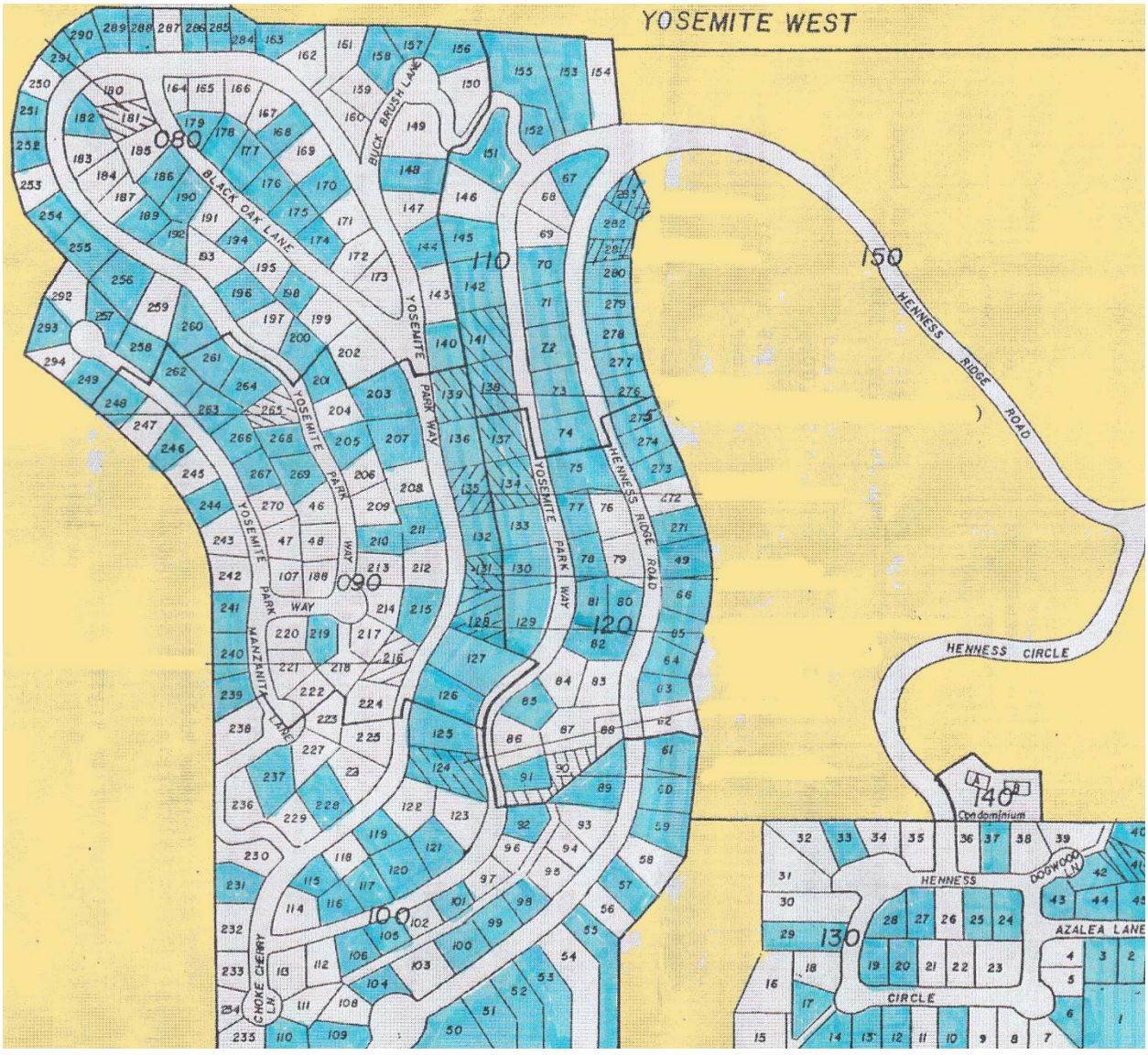
We have a property manager and/or hire someone to rake our pine needles, do we need to sign up?
Yes, everyone needs to do much more than rake pine needles. Take advantage of this free project, which will make your house and the entire neighborhood safer.

We're planning to build on our vacant lot soon, so should we wait until site prep and construction starts to do fuel reduction?

No, trees are continuing to die and standing dead / dying trees on your property may continue to spread beetle infestation and pose a threat to other structures and/or people. It's important to create 100 feet of defensible space for new construction, but inexplicably there are living and dead trees physically touching houses under construction right now.

What else can we do to help?

We need everyone to participate, so take a look at the ***Yosemite West Street-View Tree Mortality Map*** below to see where tree mortality exists in relation to your parcel(s); blue highlight indicates a parcel with dead and/or dying trees. If it affects your neighbors, please get in touch with them and make sure they sign up. It is more cost effective and time efficient to secure permission and do fuel reduction on "clusters" of adjacent parcels rather than isolated, individual parcels. Your reaching out to your neighbors is integral to the project's success.



Where can we get additional information?
YWPHI posts periodic project updates at **http://www.yosemitewest.org/grants.htm#2016grant**. Feel free to email us at **grants@yosemitewest.org** with any questions you may have.

CAL FIRE has extensive information at **http://www.ReadyforWildfire.org**. Also visit:

PrepareforBarkBeetle.org

Yosemite West Property & Homeowners, Inc.

www.YosemiteWest.org/grants.htm

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