

Golden Gate

Fuels Reduction Projects

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Golden Gate
National Recreation Area



Summary

The National Park Service is working to reduce the fire hazard along its borders. Golden Gate National Recreation Area is cooperating with the Marin County Fire Department, local fire departments and districts, and community organizations in Marin County on a series of fuels reduction projects. By reducing excessive vegetation near homes that border park land, these projects decrease the chance a fire will threaten homes by improving defensible space and emergency access.

Need for Projects

The Wildland-Urban Interface is the area where homes and wildlands meet. A wildland fire in this zone could threaten public safety and many homes.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area includes many wildland areas where flammable vegetation flourishes next to homes. Many neighborhoods border park land and are areas where fire is a concern.

In 1991, the Oakland Hills Fire destroyed over three thousand homes. Forty-five homes were lost to the Vision Fire near Point Reyes in October of 1995. Unfettered vegetation buildup fueled these fires. Such losses emphasize the importance of the National Park Service addressing Wildland-Urban Interface issues.

Visit our webpage to learn ways you can protect your own home.

Fuel Buildup

Vegetation on National Park Service land has, in many areas, built up to dangerous levels. This fuel buildup, if left unchecked, could contribute to a catastrophic fire. Non-native plants such as eucalyptus, cotoneaster, French and Scotch broom contribute to this hazardous fuel loading.

Non-native eucalyptus groves expand quickly. In some locations, eucalyptus can grow 10 – 15 feet a year. That growth creates a great deal of hazardous fuel because eucalyptus trees are extremely flammable. They shed ribbons of bark that

can act as ladders for fire to spread from the ground into the tree crowns. Both leaf and bark litter have large surface areas and burn easily. High concentrations of volatile oils in their leaves make eucalyptus especially flammable.

French and Scotch broom have also added to the fuel load. These non-natives have displaced much of the lighter, native grasslands. Removal of these highly flammable plants is an important step in fire safety.

Other Problems with Non-native species

When plants are introduced to areas outside their native habitat, the natural mechanisms that usually balance their populations are often absent. When these non-natives grow in climates similar to their native land they can expand uncontrollably.

Eucalyptus and varieties of broom exemplify this phenomenon. These invasive species crowd out native plants, threatening the diversity that is valuable to any ecosystem.

Reducing these non-natives will help restore the habitat and allow native plants and wildlife to thrive. The restoration of native plant communities also reduces fire danger as native plants are often less flammable than non-natives.

Restoration work will be done by the park's Natural Resources staff and volunteers. Contact the GGNRA Natural Resources division for information on volunteering in restoration efforts.

Partners

The GGNRA Fuels Reduction Projects are a collective effort. The National Park Service is working with county and local fire agencies such as FireSafe Marin, Southern Marin County Fire District and Marin County Fire. The National Park Service provides funding to local community groups for preventative fire protection measures in the wildland-urban interface.

The National Park Service is also working with Caltrans to control the hazards that eucalyptus trees present on Marin roadways.

The Tamalpais Community Services District and others have provided support by facilitating communication with park neighbors.

Temporary Access Limitations

For visitor safety, access may be limited at project sites while work is being done. Trails and fire roads may be closed on weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Visitors will have access to the area in the evenings and on weekends.

Further Information

For general information about fire management, site-specific information on projects, or to learn about creating a defensible space around your home, please visit our website at:

- www.nps.gov/goga/fire

Also visit these websites:

- Southern Marin Fire District www.smfd.org
- Tamalpais Community Services District www.tcsd.com
- Marin County Fire District www.marincountyfire.org
- FireSafe Marin www.firesafemarin.org
- National Interagency Fire Center www.nifc.gov
- National Park Service Fire Page www.nps.gov/fire
- GGNRA Natural Resource Page www.nps.gov/goga/natural/index.htm

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For volunteer information call the park's Habitat Restoration Team at 415-331-0732.