

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Soda Canyon Fire Safe Council

October 2012

Prepared by:

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Members,
Soda Canyon
Fire Safe Council

Executive Summary

The area covered by the Soda Canyon Fire Safe Council includes the areas along Loma Vista Drive, Shady Oaks Drive, and Capps Road, in Napa, CA. It is located along a narrow canyon formed by Soda Creek and runs approximately 6 ½ miles east and north from the intersection of Soda Canyon Road and The Silverado Trail on the west to the terminus of Soda Canyon at the northeast end. There is a volunteer fire station about mid-way up Soda Canyon Road. This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) plan has been developed to address wildfire danger to the Soda Canyon area and create a plan of action to mitigate fire danger to and in the area.

Overview

The houses along Soda Canyon are generally widely spaced, with 4 exceptions of higher density homes that can be considered neighborhoods:

1. At the end of Foss Valley, by 3030 Soda Canyon Rd.
2. Around the fire station, in mid-canyon
3. Along Loma Vista Road
4. North of Foss Valley east of Stagecoach Vineyards

The area along Soda Canyon Road south of Shady Oaks also has increased density of structures. Many of the houses have long driveways and many are behind locked gates. Sometimes vineyards surround these widely dispersed sites.

The terrain and sides of Soda Canyon are generally moderately steep to very steep. The slopes are fairly long, rising continuously up from the canyon floor to about 700 ft on the west, and to about 1800 ft on the east. If a fire starts at the bottom of the slope there are few natural breaks in topography conducive to containment.

The valley floor rises from about 100 ft in elevation at the Soda Canyon Deli to about 1500 ft in the northern part of the valley along Foss Valley. This different in elevation, along with the steep canyon sides, results in a daily pronounced flow of winds down and up the valley and slopes. The northern part of Soda Canyon opens to a broad valley at the top of Rector Creek. The canyon also broadens out south of Soda Springs Road.

The ridge to the west blocks normal westerly winds, however a few canyons can funnel winds from the west. The canyon is aligned with northerly winds, the kind that normally wreak havoc in Napa. The canyon is apt to act as a chute, or funnel for the wind.

The Soda Canyon vegetation includes:

- Oak Woodland
- Oak Savanna (mapped as woodlands or grasslands)
- Riparian Woodland
- Grassland
- Brush

The majority of the area is undeveloped, covered by oak woodlands, brush and grass..

The weather consists of dry hot summers and cool wet winters. However, Soda Canyon lies in a relatively protected area and would be subject to the extremes in local climatic conditions, exacerbated by winds that funnel down Soda Canyon and side canyons from. The canyon

slopes produce pronounced daily up-canyon and down-slope winds caused by differential heating and cooling of air during the day.

The winds that create the most severe fire danger typically blow from the north, usually in October. Winds from the east and north bring low humidities and elevated fire, causing fire to spread downhill and to the south with speeds that equal uphill spread under normal windy conditions.

Access

The only road into Soda Canyon is Soda Canyon Road and it is the only way in and out. This road is a narrow, two-lane road with abundant roadside vegetation. Loma Vista is also a narrow, 1 ½ lane road with dense roadside vegetation, and is the only way in and out of the Loma Vista area.

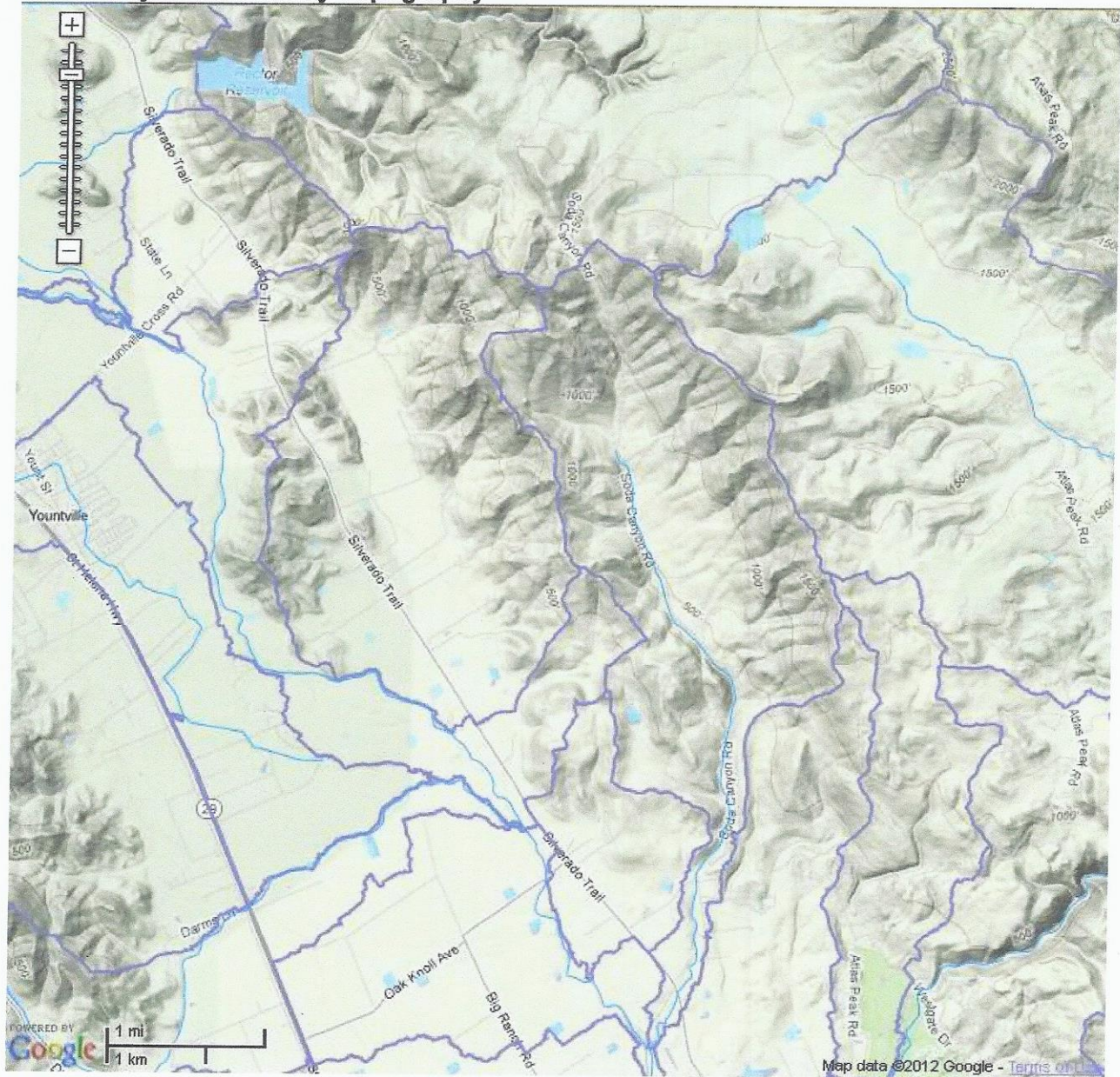
Fire Threats

The Napa Valley has a recurring history of large fires (over 10,000 acres in size), which typically burn for several days. The typical period between such large fires is approximately 20-30 years. Like much of California, fires in Napa County are almost entirely caused by human-caused accidental ignitions.

The entire area of Loma Vista/Soda Canyon is in a Wildland Urban Interface (WUI), and because of its topography and access, is at high risk for fires.

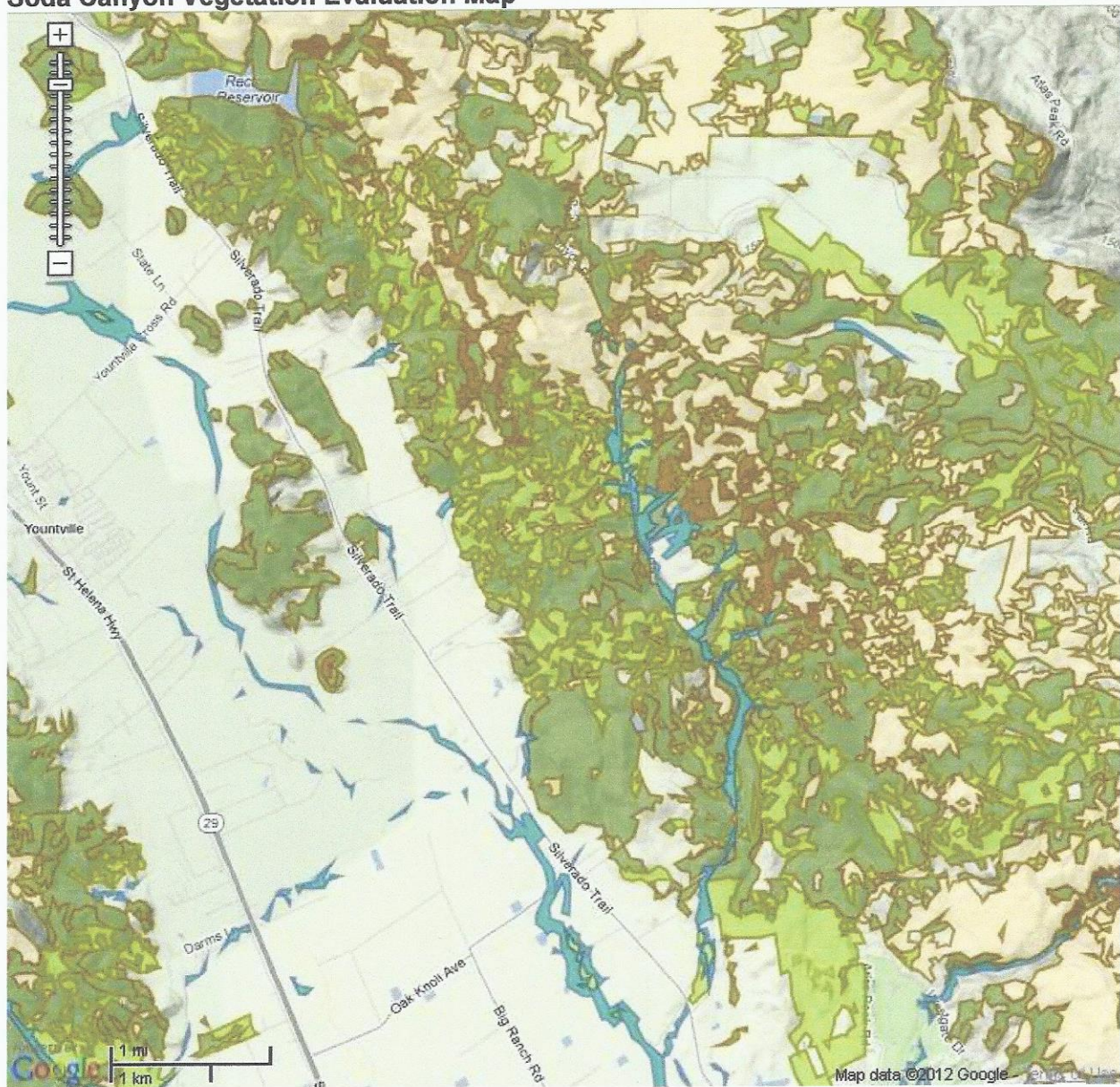
For this reason, creating defensible space, and eliminating fire fuels in strategic areas, can have a significant impact on the ability of fire crews to do their job and save homes and lives in the event of a small or large wildfire. The goal of this work is to make our community defensible under any fire situation.

Map # 1
Soda Canyon Community Topography



Topography and watershed delineation. From <http://www.napawatersheds.org>

Map # 2
Soda Canyon Vegetation Evaluation Map



Distribution of vegetation types. Dark green = woodland, light green = vineyards, aqua = riparian woodlands, beige = grasslands, and brown = brush. From <http://www.napawatersheds.org>

History

A group of homeowners residing on Loma Vista Drive, located to the west of Soda Canyon Road, approximately 1.5 miles north of the intersection with the Silverado Trail, was prompted to explore fire safety initiatives as a result of the Loma Vista fire which occurred in November 2011. In January 2012, a meeting was held at the Cal Fire fire station on Monticello Road to address questions that arose from the Loma Vista Fire. The meeting was attended by members of Cal Fire and Stephen Gort of Napa Community FireWise Foundation (NCFF). A follow-up meeting to discuss the creation of a FireWise community was scheduled in May for residents of Loma Vista and Soda Canyon, and attendees were asked to sign up if interested in forming a Firewise Council. A NCFF Community meeting on June 2 was attended by 2 residents of Loma Vista who had volunteered to help create a Loma Vista/Soda Canyon Fire Safe Council (LV/SC FSC). In July 2012, a group of Loma Vista and Soda Canyon homeowners took the initiative to form a committee with the support of the Napa Communities Firewise Foundation (NCFF), CAL FIRE, and Napa County Fire.

The NCFF engaged on our behalf their Defensible Space consultant, Carol Rice, to evaluate the needs of our community. The Assessment and Evaluation was completed in early July 2012, distributed to members of the LV/SC FSC. At the July 11 meeting, a list of 14 projects that will help make the community more defensible in a wildfire and based on the issues identified in the Assessment and Evaluation was created. The FSC adopted the recommendations and prioritized the projects at the August meeting. Two members agreed to begin drafting a "Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP)" incorporating the projects identified as crucial to creating a fire safe community. The CWPP will provide a schedule of action to complete each project, and it will be updated as projects are completed.

Utilizing \$2,500 in a generous "seed" money grant provided by the Atlas Peak FSC, and administrated by NCFF, a 40 foot stretch of roadside vegetation was cleared along Soda Canyon Road, just south of the intersection with Loma Vista Drive to demonstrate a 10' to 15' firebreak. The goal was to complete high visibility project so homeowners would see what needs to be done around their own homes. In addition, the first edition of a newsletter, the Soda Canyon FireWise News, was produced and mailed to all addresses along Soda Canyon and Loma Vista.



Vegetation clearing demonstration area – Soda Canyon Road at Loma Vista Drive

Table 1: Community Fire Safety Expenditures and Grant Funding

Year	Expenditure	Grant Received	Grant From	Cash and In-Kind Contribution
2012	\$2,500	\$2,500	Atlas Peak Fire Safe Council	Paid to contractor by NCFF

In addition to the above cash expenditure, in-kind contributions to date include 15 hours to write and edit the newsletter, 8 hours to create the layout and graphics for the newsletter (donated by a member of the FSC who is a graphic designer), 6 hours to survey gates in the Loma Vista/Soda Canyon area for compliance with Knox Box requirements, 20 hours to draft CWPP, unknown number of hours already spent by several homeowners for vegetation clearing, and at least 12 hours in meetings.

Interested Decision Makers

As noted above, the Loma Vista/Soda Canyon Community has had involvement with Napa County fire services, CAL FIRE, and The Napa Communities Firewise Foundation. The current officials involved in reviewing, commenting and approving this 2012 CWPP are:

- Local Government: Mr. Bill Dodd, Supervisor, Napa County District 4
- Local Fire Battalion Chief: Barry Biermann, Battalion Chief
- Local CAL FIRE Unit Commander: Eric Hoffman, CAL FIRE Napa-Sonoma-Lake Counties
- Napa County FD Chief: Scott A. Upton, Napa County Fire Chief
- The Loma Vista/Soda Canyon Fire Safe Council Members:
 - Cynthia Sterling
 - Henni Cohen
 - Joan & Jerry Cohn

Soda Canyon Fire Safe Council – Community Wildfire Protection Plan

- Gard Leighton
- Armand & Lynn Maaskamp
- Helen & Don Johnson
- Don Christian
- Penny Mallen
- Jessica Martin
- Pam Prado
- Anne Palotas
- Leslie Dellar
- Debra Manfree
- Doug Christian
- Catherine McNamee
- Chris Miller
- Kendra Mallen
- Seth Mallen
- Roy Chapin
- Carol Cordes

Federal Agencies

There are no Federal Agencies with oversight or connection with this area.

State/Local Agencies

With jurisdiction in the area of Soda Canyon are:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| • CAL FIRE Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit | Eric Hoffman |
| • CAL FIRE, Napa County Battalion 1415 | Barry Biermann, Battalion Chief |
| • Napa County Supervisor – District 4 | Bill Dodd |
| • Napa County Fire Department | Scott A. Upton, Fire Chief |
| • Napa County Fire Marshall | Pete Munoa |

Interested Parties

- The residents of the Loma Vista/Soda Canyon Community
- The Napa Communities Firewise Foundation

Table 2: Project Areas of Concern

PROJECTS FOR SODA CANYON FIRESAFE COUNCIL		Help Evacuation and Access	Reduce Ignitions	Reduce Property Damage	Assist Containment
Project 1	Install knox Box at Gated Entries	X			
Area	All along Soda Canyon Rd., especially at Chimney Rock Rd., 3187 to 3239 Soda Canyon Rd.				
Goal	Allow emergency responders entrance to all homes when HO's are absent				
Actions	HO's to purchase knoxboxes for all gates. Possible bulk purchase & installation				
Participants	Homeowners				
Schedule	Now, any time				
Project 2	Compliant addresses at road and home	X			
Area	All along Soda Canyon Rd.				
Goal	Allow emergency responders to respond and follow directions based on addresses				
Actions	HO's to purchase compliant addresses. Possible bulk purchase & installation				
Participants	Homeowners				
Schedule	Now, any time				
Project 3	Call 'em All	X			
Area	All of Soda Springs Road, Loma Vista, Chimney Rock, Ridge Rd., all.				
Goal	Faciliate communication				
Actions	Obtain phone numbers of volunteers, subscribe to service				
Participants	Every resident				
Schedule	Any time				
Project 4	Open Circle S Ranch road	X			
Area	Atlas Peak to Soda Springs via Circle S and Anrica Winery				
Goal	Provided second access route for evacuation				
Actions	Blade the road, smooth berms ensure water drainage				

Participants Circle S Ranch, Anrica Winery
 Early summer through late fall - when ground is not muddy

Schedule

Project 5a	Connect Shady Oaks to Soda Canyon Rd	X
Area	Eastern end of Shady Oaks Dr.	
Goal	Enable passage of evacuees to exit Soda Canyon Rd. on Shady Oaks	
Actions	Request permission, easement with property owner	
Participants	Property owners	
Schedule	Any time	

Project 5b	Connect Capps Rd to Soda Canyon Rd	X
Area	Eastern end of Shady Oaks Dr.	
Goal	Enable emergency response from Silverado Trail when Soda Canyon Rd. is blocked	
Actions	Request permission, easement with property owner, grade short sections of Capps Rd., install knock box key at gate at eastern end of Capps Rd.	
Participants	Property owners	
Schedule	Any time	

Project 6	Treat roadside vegetation along Loma Vista Rd.	X	X	X
Area	On Loma Vista from Soda Springs Rd. to just above fork			
Goal	Provide safe passage along Loma Vista			
Actions	Remove shrubs under trees, prune lower tree branches			
Participants	Residents of Loma Vista, vendor for hand labor, masticator			
Schedule	Early summer through late fall - when ground is not muddy			

Project 7	Thin understorey brush prune trees to create emergency vehicle access	X		X
Area	Within 30-ft of road, in valley at top of Rector Creek			
Goal	Provide access/egress for emergency vehicles, residents			
Actions	Change vegetation from brush to woodland: remove shrubs within 6 ft of young trees, prune low tree branches to 15 ft height over road			
Participants	Contract crews, property owners			
Schedule	Any time, but avoiding nesting season and red flag days			

Project 8	Thin, or remove eucalyptus along road Soda Canyon Rd. by Feliz Ranch Rd.	X	X	X
Area	One stand of neglected eucalyptus south of Feliz Ranch Rd.			
Goal	Remove ember production and fire intensity along roadside to allow access/egress			
Actions	Remove dead material, lower branches, trees smaller than 6 inches without arborist help, cut larger trees with contract crews, apply herbicide if needed			
Participants	Arborist and hand crews, homeowners			
Schedule	Any time, but avoiding nesting season and red flag days			
Project 9	Thin roadside vegetation on steep grade	X	X	X
Area	Within 30-ft of road, on grade south of fire station			
Goal	Allow for safe passage: improve line of site, reduce fire intensity			
Actions	Thin/remove shrubs within 30-ft of roadside, prune lower branches of trees, mow grass			
Participants	Hand crews, property owners			
Schedule	Best in the fall; mow grass when cured in summer			
Project 10	Remove piles of trimmings along Soda Canyon Rd			
Area	Near stand of eucalyptus south of Feliz Ranch Rd.			
Goal	Reduce chance of ignition, allow safe passage			
Actions	Gather material, call NCCFF's chipping hotline			
Participants	Property owners, chipping program			
Schedule	When chipping program is running: May - October			
Project 11	Turnouts along roads and driveways	X	X	X
Area	Selected wide area in the road			
Goal	Provide a place to let cars go by safely			
Actions	Widen the road to allow cars to pull off; need not be paved. Mow grass, cut brush			
Participants	Property owners			
Schedule	Any time			
Project 12	Perimeter fuelbreaks around each neighborhood		X	X
Area	100-ft width around each neighborhood			

Goal	Complete area of low fire intensity around high density of structures, aid containment, reduce fire damage
Actions	In wildlands, thin shrubs, prune lower branches of trees
Participants	Hand crews, property owners
Schedule	Best in the fall, OK anytime but avoiding nesting season and red flag days

Project 13	Safety Zones in each neighborhood	X
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Area	Selected area of low fire hazard (by reservoir, vineyards, wide valley of low vegetation, intersection of roads)
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Goal	Provide a place of refuge for people (and responders) when road is blocked
Actions	Mow grass, inform neighborhood of location, annual drills/picnics
Participants	Property owners
Schedule	Best to have gathering on site in early spring

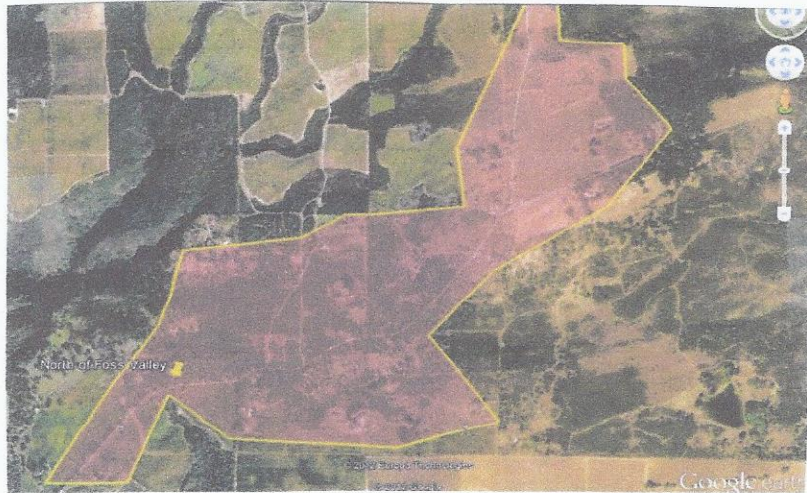
Project 14	Defensible Space within each neighborhood	X	X
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Area	Around cluster of homes in Loma Vista neighborhood
Goal	Slow fire spread to/from residences. Prevent ember creation and spread to nearby assets
Actions	Reduce brush, mow grass, remove pyrophytes with hand crews, masticators, goats
Participants	Loma Vista homeowners, contract crews
Schedule	Outside fire season, early summer or later fall

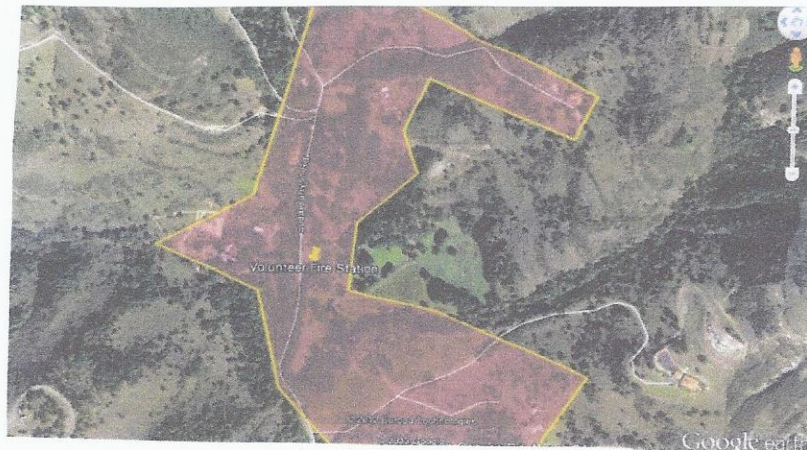
Project 15	Remove invasive plants: broom and Tree of Heaven	X	X	X	X
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Area	Along creekbed and along Soda Canyon Rd.
Goal	Creation of cleared area and removal of invasive plants
Actions	Reduce brush and trees and leaf clutter; hand crews
Participants	contract crews
Schedule	winter, spring or late fall after rains have started

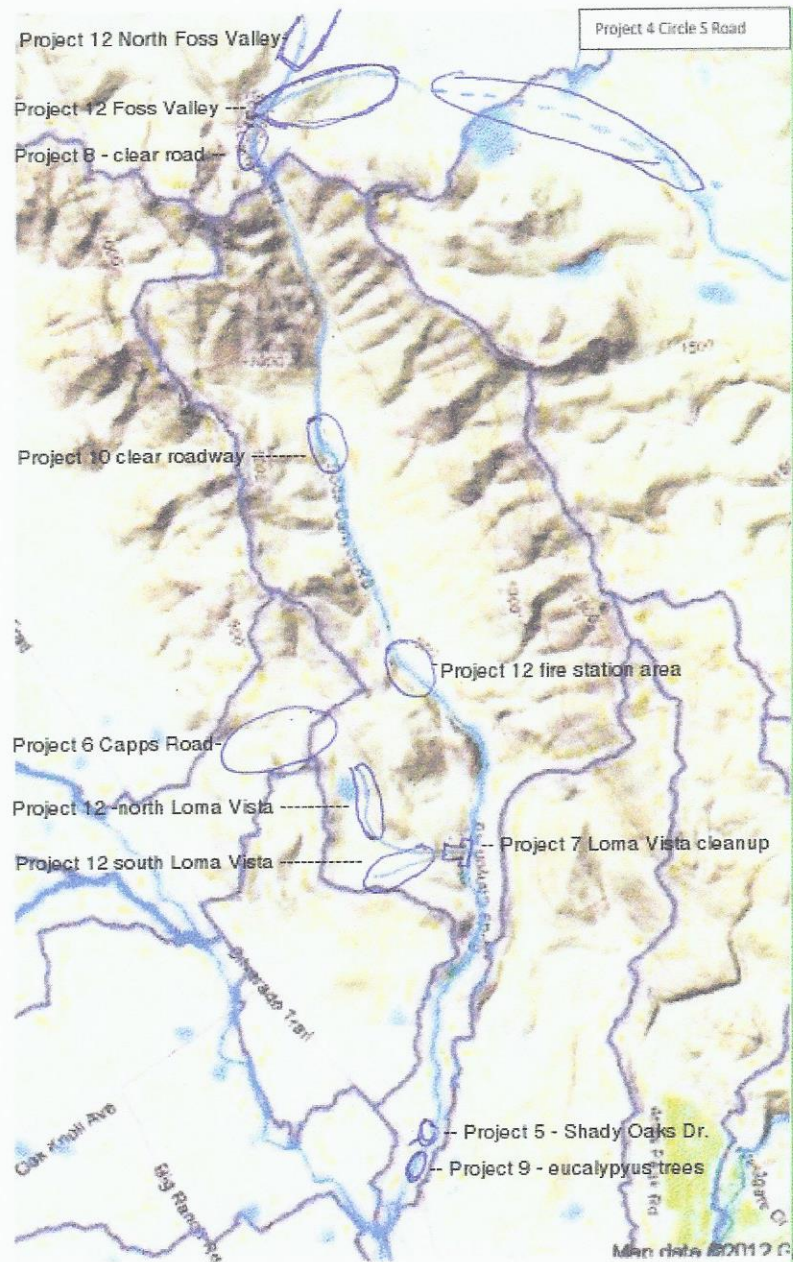
Maps #3: Project Areas



The homes in the neighborhood north of Foss Valley are intermingles with vineyards, woodlands and shrublands. Long connected corridors of wildlands break up the vineyards in the west, while the eastern edge of the neighborhood is mostly wildlands.



The fire station has a few vineyards on its southern border but wildlands to the southwest and west. Roadside vegetation may block access.



Community Risk Assessment

As noted above, the Soda Canyon area is comprised of a narrow valley with multiple side valleys, a one way in/one way out access, and is so oriented that it is susceptible to winds in the area. As a consequence, the entire area, with the possible exception of the south end of Soda Canyon Road nearest the Silverado Trail, is in a high wildfire risk area. The Project areas are synonymous with risk areas that we propose to address.

Project Priorities and Treatments

Based on a survey of attendees at a meeting of concerned residents, priority ratings were assigned to the project areas listed above. The projects were evaluated and prioritized based on time it would take and resources required to complete. The recommendations for the type and method of treatment for the surrounding vegetation are listed in the following table.

Table 4: Project Priority (highest first)

Project Number	Type of Treatment	Action to Accomplish	Overall Priority
2 Compliant Address Markers	Install reflective number signs on all homes and at road	Research appropriate signage; inform residents/homeowners of requirement to install	1
10 Remove piles of trimming along Soda Canyon Road	Chipping and removal of chips	Contact chipping program	1a Completed
3 Call 'em All phone notification system	Create Call 'em All account	Notify residents/homeowners of availability of system and obtain contact information; set up system with advice from NCFF.	2
1 Install Knox Box at Gated Entrances on Soda Canyon and Loma Vista	Installation of Knox boxes on non-complying gates by homeowners	Identify non-complying gates and provide homeowners with information about requirement and how to obtain Knox box.	3 Survey of properties with gates but no Knox Box completed
Develop Emergency Evacuation Plan & Identify Possible Evac Routes: 5A Connect Shady Oaks Dr. to Soda Canyon Rd. 5B Connect Capps Rd. to Soda Canyon Rd.	Determine action to make Capps Rd. accessible and usable by passenger cars. Install Knox box on access to Shady Oaks Dr. Post emergency exit signs at appropriate locations.	Contact residents and county agencies regarding need for connection and request action as required. Obtain permission from property owners that control access.	4

4 Open Circle S Ranch Road between Soda Canyon Rd. and Atlas Peak Rd.	Meeting with Circle S Ranch owner and county agencies and Atlas Peak Firewise Council		
6 Treat/Remove roadside vegetation along Loma Vista Road	Cut back and dig up, as feasible, all brush and small trees to create 14' clearance along road and in center area at fork.	Obtain Hand Crew Labor – residents and/or contract labor	5
13 Safety zones in each neighborhood	Survey area to identify sites	Drive through area to identify sites; contact property owners for permission to publicize sites in newsletter	6
14 Defensible Space around Loma Vista neighborhood	Remove brush, mow grass, remove pyrophytes to create buffer around neighborhood	Obtain Hand Crew Labor – residents and/or contract labor	7
11 Turnouts along roads and driveways	Mow, clear brush to create space to allow cars to pass in both directions. Homeowners and residents along roads.	Identify turnout locations; contact homeowners for driveway sites. Obtain contractors to create along roadway.	8
7 Create emergency vehicle access at top of Rector Creek	Thin understory brush and prune trees to 15' height over road	Obtain Hand Crew Labor – residents and/or contract labor	9
12 Perimeter fuelbreaks around 'neighborhoods' (Loma Vista, Fire Station mid-Soda Canyon Rd, Foss Valley)	Thin trees and vegetation in 100' width around neighborhood	Obtain Hand Crew Labor – residents and/or contract labor	10
8 Eucalyptus along Soda Canyon Rd. south of Feliz Ranch Rd.	Thin/remove eucalyptus trees; clear debris	Obtain Hand Crew Labor – with arborist direction residents and contract labor	11
9 Roadside vegetation on steep slopes within 30' of Fire Station, south side Soda Canyon Rd.	Thin/remove vegetation, prune lower branches, mow grasses		12

15 Invasive plant removal	Clear French broom along Soda Creek and Tree of Heaven along Soda Canyon Rd. south of Loma Vista Dr.	Obtain permission from Dept. Fish and Game to do work next to creek. Obtain Hand Crew Labor – residents and/or contract labor	13
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Defensible Space – Residential Properties

As the Firesafe Council for the Loma Vista/Soda Canyon area begins to implement the above projects, an important aspect will be to encourage homeowners to create defensible space around their respective properties and inform them of the curbside chipping program provided by the Napa Communities Firewise Foundation (NCFF) and how to access the program. As of the writing of this CWPP, it is unknown how many homeowners of the area have utilized this service, but this service will become a part of the FSC's fire safety planning and activities.

Additional Activities:

1. **Loma Vista/Soda Canyon Fire Safe Council Newsletter.**
To outline who we are, our projects and information pertaining to fire safety measures. It is a goal of the FSC to produce a newsletter on a regular basis (quarterly?) to inform and motivate homeowners in the area to work toward creating a fire safe and defensible space.
2. **Emphasize and improve homeowner defensible space.**
Educate homeowners about general annual maintenance that should be done prior to fire season according to State law and Napa County Codes, including creating a defensible space of least 100' around structures, increased to 200' for residences above slopes steeper than 40%. Inform residents of the availability of fire safety inspections for compliance with the "Fire Hazards Reduction Ordinance," which may result in citations for non-compliance. This can be done through the newsletter, previously published educational materials provided by CAL FIRE and Napa Firewise, and community meetings.
3. **Provide Contractor Lists:** Create a lists of local contractors and their specialties to assist homeowners in their efforts to create defensible space.
4. **Provide information and guidance on structure ignitability.**
Inform residents as well as potential developers of vacant land of the latest low-ignition building requirements in the State through the Newsletter.
5. **Collect Vital Household Information:** Create a form requesting information about each homeowner in order that locations of elderly, handicapped and/or infirm will be readably available for first responders and for contact information for Call 'em All system.
6. **Install an Area Information Knox box:** Decide on a location for this box to store above-mentioned information, maps which include streets, gates, hydrants, etc, for first responders.

Table 6: Action Plan in Date Sequence

Project Area	Landowner	Funding	Time Table
2 Compliant Address Markers	Property Owner	Property Owner	Fall/Winter 2012-13
10 Remove piles of trimming along Soda Canyon Road			1a Completed
3 Call 'em All phone notification system	Loma Vista/Soda Canyon Firesafe Council	Community Funds and NCCF grant	Fall/Winter 2012-13
1 Install Knox Box at Gated Entrances on Soda Canyon and Loma Vista	Property Owner	Property Owner	Fall/Winter 2012-13
Develop Emergency Evacuation Plan & Identify Possible Evac Routes: 5A Connect Shady Oaks Dr. to Soda Canyon Rd. 5B Connect Capps Rd. to Soda Canyon Rd. 4 Open Circle S Ranch Road between Soda Canyon Rd. and Atlas Peak Rd.	LV/SC FSC, residents of area, Atlas Peak FSC, Napa County Agencies	NCCF and Napa County	Begin January 2013
6 Treat/Remove roadside vegetation along Loma Vista Road	Property Owners	NCCF grant/Community Funds?	Winter/Spring 2013 and ongoing, depending on funding
13 Identify safety zones in each neighborhood	LV/SC FSC	None required	Spring/Summer 2013
14 Defensible Space around Loma Vista neighborhood	Property Owners	Future Grants	2014
11 Turnouts along roads and driveways	Property Owners	Future grants	2014

7 Create emergency vehicle access at top of Rector Creek	Property Owners	Future grants	2014
12 Perimeter fuelbreaks around 'neighborhoods' (Loma Vista, Fire Station mid-Soda Canyon Rd, Foss Valley)	Property Owners	Future grants	2014
8 Eucalyptus along Soda Canyon Rd. south of Feliz Ranch Rd.	Property Owners	Future grants	2014
9 Roadside vegetation on steep slopes within 30' of Fire Station, south side Soda Canyon Rd.	Property Owners	Future grants	2014
15 Invasive plant removal	Property Owners	Future grants; CA Department of Fish and Game grant?	2014

It should be noted that this timetable considers the priority of the project. The community will assess its progress annually and make necessary additions and/or adjustments to the work as planned.

A complete copy of our 2010 Vegetation Management Plan which was compiled by "Fire Smart Defensible Space, Inc." is attached as an appendix to this plan.

The Loma Vista/Soda Canyon Wildfire Protection Plan:

- Was collaboratively developed by interested homeowners of the area
- It identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment that will protect Berryessa Highlands.
- And it also takes measures to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area addressed by the plan.

Soda Canyon Fire Safe Council - Community Wildfire Protection Plan

The following entities mutually agree with the contents of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan:

Agreed: Bill Doda Date: 3-7-13
Bill Doda, Supervisor
Napa County - District 4

Agreed: _____ Date: _____
~~Tim Streblow, Chief~~
~~CAL FIRE Sonoma-Lake-Napa Unit Commander~~

Agreed: Scott Upton Date: 1-22-13
Scott Upton, Chief, Napa County Fire Department

Agreed: Peter Munoa Date: 11/7/13
Peter Munoa, Napa County Fire Marshall
Napa County - District 4

Agreed: Barry Biernmann Date: 1-9-13
Barry Biernmann, Battalion Chief 1416

Agreed: Stephen Gort Date: 3/9/13
Stephen Gort, Vice President & Treasurer NCFF,
Highlands Community Advisor & Fiscal Sponsor