

# Lake Hodges, CA 92029



## COMMUNITY WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLAN

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Prepared by:

**Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council  
2008 CWPP Task Force**

*In cooperation with:*

Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District and CERT  
City of Escondido Fire Department and CERT  
Rincon Del Diablo Fire Protection District  
City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department  
California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection  
County of San Diego Land Use and Environment Group  
California Bureau of Land Management  
California Chaparral Institute  
San Diego County Fire Safe Council  
California Fire Safe Council



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**Email: [LakeHodges@Cox.net](mailto:LakeHodges@Cox.net)**

**Created for and by the communities served by the Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council.**

The neighborhoods served directly by the Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council are located in a fire-prone environment located north of the Lake Hodges Dam, west of San Pasqual Valley and south of Citracado Parkway in the far southern portion of the City of Escondido, plus nearby neighborhoods within the 92029 Zip Code, including Mount Israel and Del Dios in the Rancho Santa Fe Fire District and parts of the Rincon Del Diablo Fire District near West Via Rancho Parkway, immediately south of Escondido and north of Lake Hodges. These neighborhoods are all designated as Very High Risk Fire Zones by Cal Fire.

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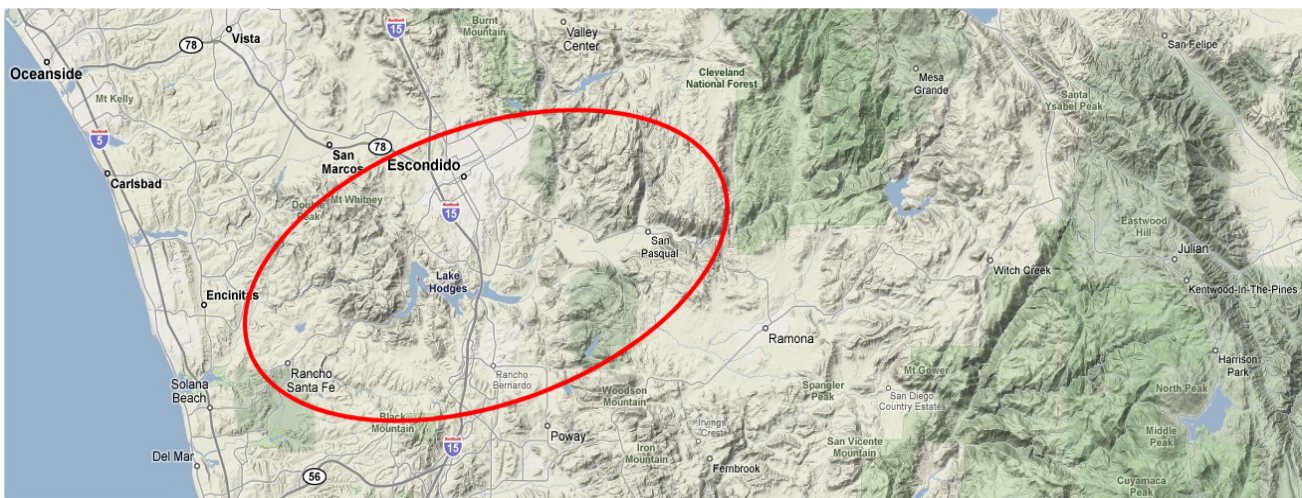
## PREFACE

“The idea for community-based forest planning and prioritization is neither novel nor new. However, the incentive for communities to engage in comprehensive forest planning and prioritization was given new and unprecedented impetus with the enactment of the Healthy Forests Restoration Act (HFRA) in 2003. This landmark legislation includes the first meaningful statutory incentives for the US Forest Service (USFS) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) to give consideration to the priorities of local communities as they develop and implement forest management and hazardous fuel reduction projects. In order for a community to take full advantage of this new opportunity, it must first prepare a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Local wildfire protection plans can take a variety of forms, based on the needs of the people involved in their development. Community Wildfire Protection Plans may address issues such as wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, or structure protection—or all of the above. The process of developing a CWPP can help a community clarify and refine its priorities for the protection of life, property, and critical infrastructure in the wildland–urban interface. It also can lead community members through valuable discussions regarding management options and implications for the surrounding watershed. The language in the HFRA provides maximum flexibility for communities to determine the substance and detail of their plans and the procedures they use to develop them.”

*From: “Preparing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan: A Handbook for Wildland-Urban Interface Communities” Sponsored by the Communities Committee, National Association of Counties, National Association of State Foresters and the Western Governors’ Association.*

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council delivers direct services to an area of approximately 18 square miles and a population estimated to include approximately 1,800 homes and 4,100 people. Our sphere of influence extends to a larger area of roughly 42 square miles with as many as 68,000 residents surrounding the Greater Lake Hodges area in the cities of San Diego and Escondido as well as communities in unincorporated portions of San Diego County.



Lake Hodges / San Dieguito River Watershed Sphere of Influence: From Rancho Santa Fe east to San Pasqual



## 1.1 Direct Services Provided

Our directly served areas are located north of the Lake Hodges Dam, west of San Pasqual Valley and south of Citracado Parkway in the far southern portion of the City of Escondido, plus nearby neighborhoods within the 92029 Zip Code, including Mount Israel and Del Dios in the Rancho Santa Fe Fire District and parts of the Rincon Del Diablo Fire District near West Via Rancho Parkway, immediately south of Escondido and north of Lake Hodges. These neighborhoods are all designated as Very High Risk Fire Zones by Cal Fire.



### Direct Services Areas – Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council

Section 3 - Within County Supervisorial District 3 (Pam Slater-Price, Supervisor)

Section 5 - Within County Supervisorial District 5 (Bill Horn, Supervisor)

Section 3a - City of Escondido, Summer Creek, Hamilton, Eucalyptus areas

Section 3b - City of Escondido, Lomas Serenas, Del Lago, Sonata, Vineyard Estates, Sierra Linda areas

Section 5a - Rancho Santa Fe Fire District north of the Lake Hodges Dam -- Mount Israel and Del Dios

Section 5b - Rincon Fire District west of I-15 -- All along West Via Rancho Parkway (unincorporated areas), including Quail Glen, Lake Hodges Estates, Purer Road, Via Loma Vista, Bernardo Lane and Road, Quiet Hills, Felicity Park and other nearby areas

Fire protection and emergency medical services in this area are provided by the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District, the City of Escondido Fire Department, the City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department and Cal Fire.

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) was developed by the Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council CWPP Task Force with guidance and support from the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District, Escondido Fire Department, Rincon Del Diablo Fire District, San Diego Fire-Rescue Department California Department Of Forestry and Fire Protection, County Of San Diego Land Use and Environment Group, California Bureau of Land Management and the San Diego County Fire Safe Council, plus mentoring by the Deer Springs Fire Safe Council north of Escondido and the Scripps Ranch Fire Safe Council nearby in San Diego.

The role of the Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council (LHFSC) in preparing this document is in keeping with our 2008 mission: "To preserve and protect the lives of neighbors and our natural and manmade resources by educating and mobilizing all residents to make their homes and neighborhoods fire safe and fire wise."

This 2008 Lake Hodges Community Wildfire Protection Plan is a dynamically evolving document designed to continuously clarify and refine our community priorities for the protection of life, property and critical infrastructure from wildfire in the wildland-urban interface near Lake Hodges in north inland San Diego County. It is also intended to serve as a vehicle to facilitate discussion among community members regarding pre-fire management options and their implications for the Lake Hodges watershed.

## **2. COLLABORATION**

Within our served neighborhoods, meetings and conversations with governmental, private and public groups are ongoing to improve and expand this 2008 plan during 2009. Some of the groups and agencies currently assisting in the development and continued evolution of this Lake Hodges CWPP are included on the following list:

- Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council
- Del Dios / Mount Israel Town Council
- Summer Creek Home Owners Association
- Quail Glen Neighborhood Volunteers
- Lake Hodges Estates / Lundy Lake Neighborhood Volunteers
- Purer Road / Vista de la Cresta Neighborhood Volunteers

- Via Loma Vista / Via Valle Vista Neighborhood Volunteers
- Bernardo Lane / Circle Drive Neighborhood Volunteers
- Quiet Hills Neighborhood Volunteers
- Lomas Serenas Home Owners Association
- Sonata Home Owners Association
- Sierra Linda Neighborhood Volunteers

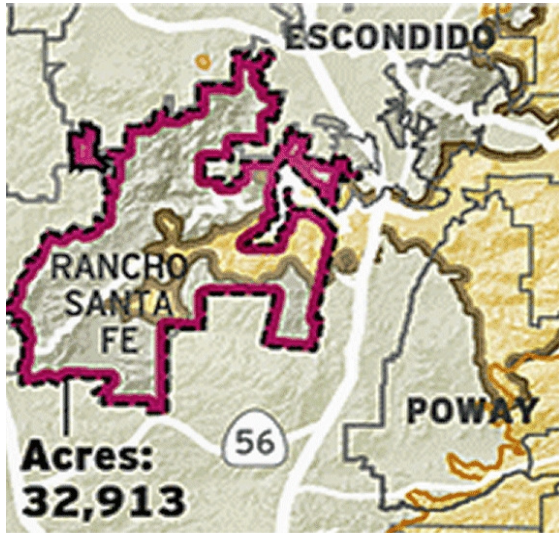
- Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District and CERT
- City of Escondido Fire Department and CERT
- Rincon Del Diablo Fire District
- City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department
- California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
- County of San Diego Land Use and Environment Group

- California Bureau of Land Management
- California Chaparral Institute
- Deer Springs Fire Safe Council
- Scripps Ranch Fire Safe Council
- Fallbrook Fire Safe Council
- Ramona Fire Safe Council and Ramona CERT
- San Diego County Fire Safe Council

### 3. COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

#### 3.1 Description of Geography

The area served by the Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council is located north of the Lake Hodges Dam, west of San Pasqual Valley and south of Citracado Parkway in the far southern portion of the City of Escondido, plus nearby neighborhoods within the 92029 Zip Code, including Mount Israel and Del Dios in the Rancho Santa Fe Fire District and parts of the Rincon Del Diablo Fire District near West Via Rancho Parkway, immediately south of Escondido and north of Lake Hodges. These neighborhoods are all designated as Very High Risk Fire Zones by Cal Fire.



*In September, 2008, the Forest Area Safety Task Force, a collection of more than 80 federal, state and local agencies responsible for making the county safer from wildfires, released updated fire risk maps. One of the three regions they considered at greatest risk in all of San Diego County was a 32,913-acre area that includes Rancho Santa Fe, parts of Lake Hodges and Southwest Escondido and other nearby communities.*

Emergency response within this area is often complicated by water, bridges, ridges and canyons that make up the topography, plus jurisdictional divisions that include the City of San Diego, the City of Escondido, the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District and the Rincon del Diablo Fire Protection District.

The communities served by the LHFSC consist of predominantly single-family residences, nearly all of which lie on the wildland-urban interface between native vegetation and developed communities.

#### 3.2 Natural Resources

Lake Hodges is part of the San Dieguito River watershed, a drainage area of approximately 346 square miles in north inland San Diego County. The majority of this watershed is within unincorporated jurisdictions of San Diego County. The current San Dieguito watershed population is estimated at approximately 155,000 people. However, this level is projected increase to over 210,000 residents by 2015.

There are several important natural areas near Lake Hodges and within the San Dieguito River watershed that sustain a number of threatened and endangered species, including those within the 55-mile long, 80,000 acre San Dieguito River Park, which encompasses much of the land around Lake Hodges.

Downstream from Lake Hodges, the Pacific Ocean at the mouth of the San Dieguito River is listed as a 303(d)-impaired water body for elevated coliform bacteria. The San Dieguito Lagoon is especially sensitive to the effects of pollutants and oxygen depletion due to restricted or intermittent tidal flushing.

### 3.3 Notable Wildland Fire Risks near Lake Hodges

The Lake Hodges area includes coastal mountain peaks as high as 1,350 feet above sea level (Mt. Israel) and other inaccessible terrain consisting of large canyons, draws, peaks and valleys.

Lake Hodges is divided by the Interstate-15 bridge on the border between the cities of San Diego and Escondido. Our served area includes a north-south stretch of Interstate-15 bordered by wildland vegetation. This is one of two critical and major north-south freeways connecting San Diego with Riverside/San Bernardino and the Los Angeles Areas. Traffic volume is heavy at most times of the day. Fires with origins along the shoulders of the Interstate pose a direct threat to our communities and the natural areas around Lake Hodges.

To the east of Interstate-15 is a steep and narrow canyon with a notable east-west aspect extending eastward into the San Pasqual Valley and on into Clevenger Canyon and towards more mountainous terrain north of the community of Ramona. Considered very risky by fire officials, this unique east-west wind channel has been known to create very high velocity winds and fast-moving wind-driven fires, such as the Witch Creek Fire of October, 2007.



**Neighborhood Burning at Lake Hodges, October 2007: Witch Creek Fire**

## 4. FACTORS AFFECTING LOCAL FIRE POTENTIAL

The fire history map for San Diego County shows:

### 4.1 Fuels

Analysis of fuel type and conditions prevalent in San Diego County indicate that more than two thirds of the fuels in the county are ranked in the high to very high range with regard to combustibility. The vegetation throughout the Lake Hodges area is a combination of coastal sage scrub (California sagebrush, California buckwheat, and laurel sumac) and chaparral (chamise, scrub oak, and manzanita). Although we had a major fire in 2007, fuel loading in many vegetated areas is an important concern for the risk and damaging effect of wildfire.

### 4.2 Weather

Typical summer weather conditions classify our area as a “very high fire danger” zone. Fall and winter Santa Ana events, with the potential for extreme fire behavior, place it in the “extreme fire danger” category during these periods. It is not uncommon for the National Weather Service (NWS) to declare more than one “Red Flag” episode each year when high temperatures, low humidity and high winds combine to create a critical fire hazard. Red Flag conditions are not limited to Santa Ana conditions and may occur when wind velocity, humidity and temperature exist in a relationship that will support extreme fire behavior.

***As noted previously, the east-west aspect of the Lake Hodges watershed and associated canyons have the potential to funnel very high velocity winds and fast-moving wind-driven fires into the Lake Hodges basin, putting thousands of residents at risk.***

## 5. ASSETS AT RISK

Assets at risk refer to anything having the potential to be damaged or destroyed directly or indirectly by wildfire. There are several types of assets at risk within our area.

### 5.1 Waterways

Lake Hodges and the San Dieguito River are significant drainages toward the Pacific Ocean. Destruction of the watershed could result in soil erosion and runoff from winter rains with subsequent damage to the Lake Hodges ecosystem and sensitive downstream lagoons.

Lake Hodges is a critical part of the San Diego County Water Authority’s (SDCWA) Emergency Storage Project and the Lake Hodges to Olivenhain Pipeline Tunnel (LHOP) that connects Lake Hodges to the Olivenhain Reservoir to provide an uninterrupted source of water to San Diego County if a catastrophe, such as a major earthquake, were to cut off the water supply from north. The Lake Hodges to Olivenhain pipeline is intended to allow the SDCWA to move water from one reservoir to another and will also be used for pumped storage, generating electricity at peak times. The Lake Hodges to Olivenhain Pipeline 40 megawatt pumped storage project is valued at \$108 million, and is designed to deliver a reliable source of water in emergency situations and electricity-generating capability to meet the demands of the San Diego region.



## 5.2 Structures

Due to the nature of our area and the placement of homes and other structures near vegetation, we will always have the potential for significant loss of structures due to wildfire. Homes, public buildings, small businesses and the Lake Hodges Dam, built in 1918, could all be threatened by future wildland fires.



**Lake Hodges Dam**

## 5.3 Wildlife and Plant Communities

The dense vegetation within our area provides habitat for many species of wildlife. This habitat would be damaged or destroyed as the result of wildfire. Excessive fire frequency and/or disturbance can compromise the ecological health of native plant communities such as chaparral and coastal sage scrub. Such disturbances will result in these communities being invaded or replaced by non-native, flammable weeds and grasses.

## 5.4 Infrastructure

The Lake Hodges area is home to several facilities that provide services to meet the daily living needs of San Diego County residents. The Del Dios Highway and Via Rancho Parkway, both of which run along the Lake, are major east-west thoroughfares connecting coastal communities to inland San Diego County. Both of these highways are critical for commuting, commerce and evacuation in the event of a regional emergency.

### 5.4.1 Local and Regional Water Supply

Numerous local water supply tanks, regional water pipelines, two reservoirs, a dam and other water supply assets, including the Del Dios Mutual Water Company and major infrastructure operated by the Rincon del Diablo Municipal Water District, are located at or near Lake Hodges.

### 5.4.2 Power Distribution

A number of important power lines run near the Lake Hodges area bringing power to both coastal and inland communities.

### 5.4.3 Communications Facilities

Several cellular telephone transmission sites are situated throughout the Lake Hodges area, many in densely vegetated areas and on high points that could be threatened by wildland fires.

## 6. COMMUNITY BASE MAPS

The latest mapping technology combined with local expertise, satellite imagery and GPS ground surveys yield detailed maps that graphically present a variety of data about our area. Maps of this type provide a visual aid that can assist community members in more easily understanding the geographic and vegetation complexities of our area. The County of San Diego Department of Planning and Land Use Department has developed a series of maps depicting the site and situation of the Greater Lake Hodges area (attached as LHFSC-CWPP-2008-AppendA.pdf). These maps cover portions of the Rancho Santa Fire Protection District, portions of the Rincon del Diablo Fire Protection District and portions of the City of Escondido served by the Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council.

## 7. LOCAL PREPAREDNESS AND FIREFIGHTING CAPABILITY

Most of the areas around Lake Hodges are served by modern, multi-purpose fire agencies. Initial response to all fire, medical and associated emergencies within the Lake Hodges area, including a stretch of Interstate-15 is the responsibility of the City of San Diego Fire-Rescue Department, the City of Escondido Fire Department and the Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District. Cal Fire has primary responsibility for wildland threats around Lake Hodges.

## 8. FIRE SAFE PROJECTS FOR 2008 AND 2009

### 8.1 Overview of Priorities

The majority of lands within our served area are privately owned, with the exception of the Lake Hodges basin (owned by the City of San Diego) and the San Dieguito River Park areas. Thus, it will be necessary to work directly with private property owners to effect a reduction in fuel load on their properties and to reduce the threat of structure ignitability. Residential landscaping, fire-resistant construction and management of invasive non-native annual plants will be crucial for community fire safety.

### 8.2 Program Focus

Our focus for 2008 and 2009 is a two-pronged program aimed at 1) Community Education Programs and other resources to encourage and enable local residents to make their properties and homes more fire safe, and 2) Fuel and Wildfire Hazard Mitigation.

The extensive native vegetation within the Greater Lake Hodges area represents a critical hazard for wildfire. Consequently, the highest priority for this CWPP is to develop a program to mitigate this hazard using a variety of mutually supportive strategies including fire safe building designs and appropriate fuel management. This program will also identify and prioritize the areas within our served communities that pose the greatest threat for the loss of structures from a potential wildfire.

The Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council has been developing an ongoing program of education, hazard identification and hazard mitigation on a resident-to-resident community level. The LHFSC is aware that the magnitude of this program will require funding from outside our area and our Council will explore all avenues of funding such as competitive grants from governmental agencies and direct grants and contributions from business and industry.

The Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council has determined that no fuel reduction projects are pending within the Lake Hodges area other than routine enforcement activities of our area fire marshals. Since the vast majority of our area is private property, the LHFSC proposes to sponsor and facilitate a community-based effort. In cooperation with local agencies, the Council will assist property owners in meeting the standards of the new Public Resource Code 4291.

Public Resource Code 4291 can be used as a model to reflect the total fire risk equation. We recognize that there is a need to manage fuel, embers, vegetation, structures and site defensibility. Fuel means any combustible material, such as a house itself, wood piles, propane tanks, decks, ornamental plants, etc. Vegetation means all plants, shrubs, grass and perennial or annual plants. Defensibility extends beyond the site fuel management practices including measures that increase the likelihood of a structure to withstand ignition.

### 8.3 Specific goals

1) Recruit and train volunteers who will provide education to the residents of our area about current hazard abatement regulations.

2) Establish a public service program of seminars and workshops that provides property owners with training in the following areas:

- a. Site and structure defensibility to reduce the risk of structure ignitions.
- b. Reducing structure ignition by understanding fire resistant design features.
- c. Understanding the flammability of all vegetation.
- d. Identifying native and non-native plants appropriate for residential fire wise landscaping.
- e. Planning for the areas 30 feet from the house.
- f. Learning management techniques to achieve fire wise native trees and chaparral.
- g. Using appropriate and safe techniques for working in the chaparral.
- h. Reducing "ladder" fuels by proper maintenance of areas surrounding the house.

3) With the funding that is available, provide assistance with the management of harvested plant material, such as chipping services, and assistance with other landscape maintenance, such as tree trimming, when help is requested by individual homeowners due to their limited financial resources.

### 8.4 Additional topics to be covered through educational workshops, materials and meetings

Examples of additional topics to be covered would include, but not be limited to:

The proper storage of flammable materials, storage of firewood away from structures, pruning vegetation to lessen fire propagation, proper disposal of vegetation trimmings and fire-resistant materials for construction, upgrading and landscaping.

Many older homes within our served area were constructed in compliance with building codes that did not contain the fire safety provisions of today's codes. These homes will receive additional attention so that owners can increase the chances of structural survival in a wildfire by incorporating several treatments ranging from simple do-it-yourself projects to treatments that are more involved and costly. Appropriate treatment will vary from structure to structure and the treatments to be utilized will be left to the discretion of the property owners. Some examples of treatments for older structures that will be presented are: clear all flammable vegetation and material from beneath open decks, enclose undersides of elevated decks with fire-resistant building materials or wire mesh with openings no greater than 1/4 inch, screen all foundation and roof vents with wire mesh with openings no greater than 1/8 inch, enclose open eaves, install "bird-stop" in tile roofs, and replace wood-shingled roofs with fire-resistant roofing.

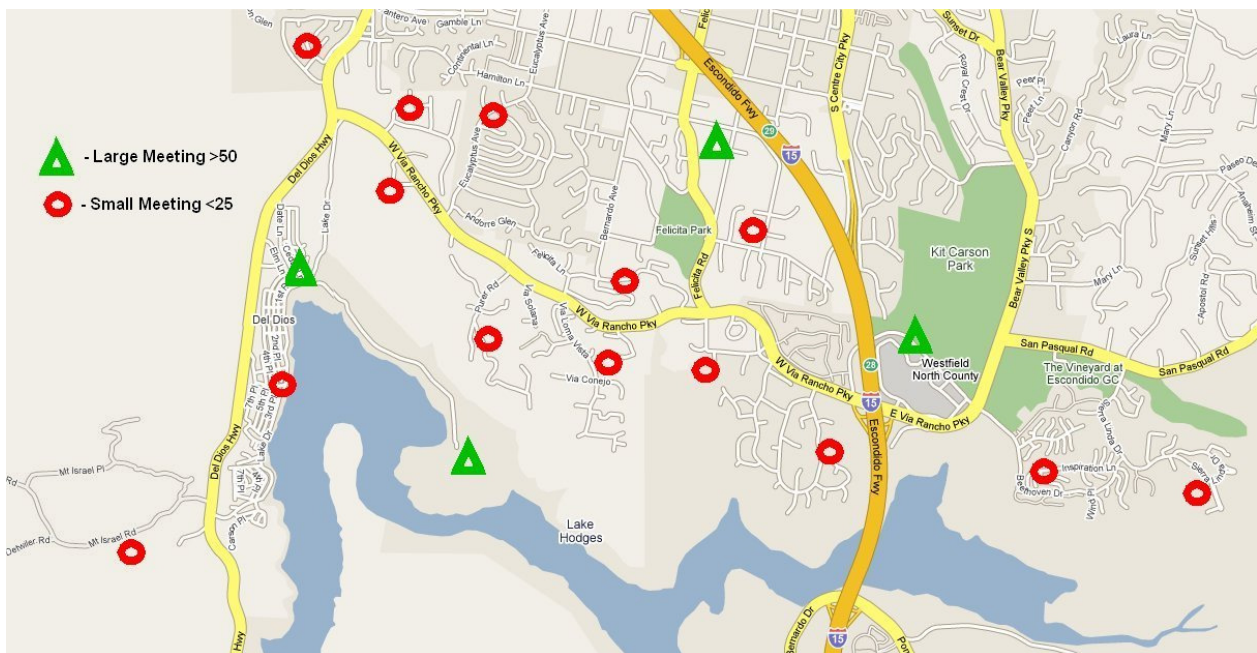
Additional information will be provided to property owners highlighting wildfire prevention around the home. This would include, for example, such topics as the limitation of certain activities during high fire danger periods, the maintenance of powered field and garden tools in proper operating condition, the careful refueling of such equipment, and such seemingly routine activities as the careful disposal of smoking material and fireplace ashes.

## 9. LAKE HODGES FIRE SAFE COUNCIL ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The LHFSC is an active organization consisting of thirteen members of the Board of Directors plus additional representatives from communities and neighborhood associations throughout our area.

Since its founding in 2006, the LHFSC has conducted numerous public meetings including educational and planning sessions. We have held six to ten meetings per year with attendance ranging from 30 to 150 attendees per meeting.

Our 2009 education plan includes small, home-based neighborhood meetings (25 people and less), along with larger meetings (50 to 150 people) in public facilities such as fire stations and libraries. We also have close working relationships with CERT organizations (Community Emergency Response Teams) surrounding Lake Hodges.



### 2009 Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council Public Educational Meeting Plan

In cooperation with the County of San Diego and our local fire authorities, the LHFSC supports and promotes fire wise activities and constantly seeks avenues to educate local residents about fire safety and prevention.

The LHFSC is already assisting residents of our area in reducing the ignitability of their homes and outbuildings through a series of educational mailings, seminars and workshops designed to convey methods of treatment to reduce structure ignitability.

These offerings consist of presentations and hands-on workshops provided by the LHFSC, local public safety personnel and professionals in related fields. Residents receive educational materials and invitations to seminars and workshops. The seminars and workshops open to all residents and are announced in local publications, online and in Fire Safe newsletters.



The LHFSC is delivering the message that all owners of residential property near Lake Hodges must comply with the provisions of California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 4291 parts a through f. Educating residents on the requirements to comply with the code and the resulting benefits that would accrue from compliance will be the focus of the workshops and seminars during 2008 and 2009.

Specifically, the provisions of PRC 4291 (paraphrased) are:

- a. Fuel modification within 30 feet around the structure, taking into account the flammability of the structure and the type of vegetation.
- b. Maintain a defensible space zone within 100 feet of an occupied structure, but not beyond the property line unless allowed by state law.
- c. Trim trees for at least 10 feet of clearance around a chimney.
- d. Remove dead growth from any tree overhanging a building.
- e. Maintain the roof of a structure free of leaves, needles or other dead vegetative growth.
- f. Install and maintain spark arrestors on all chimneys.

## 10. CERTIFICATION OF DOCUMENT

This Community Wildfire Protection Plan was developed for the Lake Hodges area by the Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council with local and regional collaboration. This plan is a dynamic document that will be updated. It identifies initial areas for fuel reduction treatments (shown on the attached maps) and recommends fire safe measures in accordance with the laws of the state of California that will help reduce risks in the Greater Lake Hodges area. This plan includes some measures to reduce the ignitability of structures throughout the area. The following entities attest that the standards listed above are proposed to be met and mutually agree with the content of this Community Wildfire Protection Plan.

San Diego County Land Use and Environmental Group: \_\_\_\_\_

San Diego Fire Service Coordinator: \_\_\_\_\_

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, San Diego Unit:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Del Dios Town Council: Michelle DePriest Michelle DePriest 10/29/08

Rancho Santa Fe Fire Protection District: \_\_\_\_\_

Escondido Fire Department: \_\_\_\_\_

Fire Safe Council of San Diego County: \_\_\_\_\_

Lake Hodges Fire Safe Council: Kurt Barnhart Kurt Barnhart 10/29/08

Attached document -- LHFSC-CWPP-2008-AppendA.pdf