

Published August 3rd, 2022

Lamorinda wildfire preparedness advanced by state grants

By Sora O'Doherty



The Campolindo neighborhood in Moraga has just been awarded a \$5,000 grant for wildfire preparedness. The grant comes through the Diablo Fire Safe Council (DFSC) which receives funding from Cal Fire. Orinda View in Orinda just completed work done under a similar DFSC grant.

The Campolindo homeowners association has decided to divide up their grant among 10 homeowners with project costs of at least \$1,000. The grants from DFSC are matching grants, so each homeowner in Campolindo who is accepted for the grant program will receive a grant of \$500, which must be matched by the homeowner and expended on an approved wildfire preparedness project.

Workers in February remove juniper in Campolindo neighborhood. Photo Sora O'Doherty Campolindo applied for the grant in March, but has just received it. The purpose of the grant is to help homeowners remove materials from their properties that would be fuel for wildfires. In particular, juniper bushes,

which are extremely flammable, and dead trees are required to be removed under the fire code. Campolindo residents who wish to apply for a grant must submit their names and project descriptions to their block captains by 8 p.m. Aug. 12. A copy should also be sent to Steve Hoyt at stevehoyt02@gmail.com. Later that day, a random drawing will be held to select the 10 homeowners who will get the grants.

Those selected will be required to get a bid from one of the two vendors selected by the Homeowners Association. For juniper or brush removal, Campolindo will use Wildland Corporation, and those selected may contact Will Thorn at (510) 306-6285. A number of vendors for tree removal are being finalized, and applicants will be given that information when available. The bid details must then be sent to DFSC and the work must be performed within 30 days of the bid. There is no flexibility in the deadlines.

DFSC is a nonprofit 501(3)C group that receives grants from a variety of sources. Right now, according to Cheryl Miller, DFSC executive director, the group's big funder is the California Climate Investment Program, a state program administered through Cal Fire. DFSC serves both Contra Costa and Alameda counties. For the Cost Share Assistance Program, there is currently a list of 48 projects awaiting funding.

To be eligible to receive a grant, the application must represent a group of at least five homeowners, but may contain more. DFSC also just completed a grant program in Sleepy Hollow on St. James Way. Eligible projects should not be for code compliance work that needs to be done immediately, but should be for more long-haul projects. Chipping, hauling, mowing or weed wacking can be included in projects, but may not be the sole work being funded.

Tree thinning and limbing up are acceptable activities, as are brush cutting, grazing, or use of hired mechanical equipment for fuel reduction.

Residents who wish to learn more about the DFSC grant program can find more information on their website, http://www.diablofiresafe.org/index.html or may contact Cheryl Miller, Executive Director at dfscmiller@comcast.net.

Reach the reporter at: sora@lamorindaweekly.com

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