

Community Focus Statement A: Improve the quality of our built environment to enhance community health, safety, neighborhood character, and the image of our business corridors.

Action Statement A.8: Create and maintain a healthy forest and forest fuels management program.

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Benchmark: A healthy forest and forest fuels management program is developed and implemented in partnership with the US Forest Service and Big Bear Fire Department.

Champion: Volunteer group or person or can be identified by the community

Estimated Cost: \$6,000–\$20,000



Maintaining the surrounding natural environment is important to the character of the community. Source: Michael Baker International

The Bear Valley communities, like much of the rest of the San Bernardino Mountains, is a designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. As such, there is a substantive threat of a major wildfire that could affect large numbers of residents and visitors. Wildfires are a regular feature of many of California’s ecosystems, but fires were largely suppressed throughout much of the twentieth century out of a concern that they would threaten communities and valuable natural resources. Today, wildland managers increasingly understand the important role that wildfires play in preserving a healthy forest, including how small

wildfires help to clear the brush which may otherwise build up and lead to a major wildfire that could pose a significant threat. By creating and maintaining a healthy forest and fuels management program, the Bear Valley communities can help promote a thriving forest that contributes to the local economy and quality of life, while simultaneously helping to protect the communities from a devastating wildfire.

A healthy forest and fuels management program includes various strategies, with a primary objective of fuel reduction. If not removed, either by people or by natural processes (usually small fires), fuel such as dry or dead vegetation may build up in wildland areas, contributing to the risk of a substantial blaze. This effort can involve people physically removing accumulated dried vegetation or thinning forests by removing small trees that are a major source of fuel for large fires. In some cases, grazing animals such as goats may be set loose in an area to remove excess vegetation. Forest managers may allow some wildfires to burn themselves out naturally rather than actively trying to extinguish them, provided the fires do not threaten local communities, and in some instances may deliberately set fires. In addition to helping to clear accumulated fuel, this strategy helps the various plant and animal species whose life cycles depend on a regular wildfire regime. Wildland managers can also create fuel breaks, which are lines of partially or entirely cleared vegetation that wildfires often have difficulty crossing.



An effective healthy forest and fuels management program will require a concerted effort by the San Bernardino County Fire Department and the US Forest Service, which is responsible for fighting wildfires in the San Bernardino National Forest, in partnership with the Bear Valley communities. All involved groups should establish a process and forum for regular coordination, ensuring a unified approach in the area. Forest managers can solicit volunteers from community groups to assist with brush clearing activities. With additional training, volunteers can also conduct outreach and educate the community, which can help support fire-safe practices. If any wildfires will be allowed to burn out naturally or are deliberately set as part of this strategy, the responsible fire agency must immediately inform community members to reduce community concern and minimize the volume of false alarm calls that may overtax agency resources.

Action	Action Leader	Timeline	Resources
1. Hold a meeting of interested parties and form core team	Champion	Month 1	Landscape-Level Strategies for Forest Fuel Management
2. Engage with the US Forest Service, Big Bear Fire Department, and County Fire Hazard Abatement to form an effective working relationship on healthy forests and fuel management.	Team	Months 1 – 3	https://pubs.usgs.gov/dds/dds-43/VOL_II/VII_C56.PDF Forest Stewardship Series: Wildfire and Fuel Management http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8245.pdf
3. Review existing healthy forest and fuel management plans, and revise strategies.	Team with agencies	Months 4 – 12	Fire and Fuel Management http://nature.berkeley.edu/stephenslab/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Husari-et-al-Stephens-Fuel-Man-AFE-9-06.pdf
4. Implement the revised strategies.	Team with Agencies	Month 12, on-going	Wildfire exposure and fuel management on western US national forests http://www.cafsti.org/wp-content/uploads/briefingroom/Wilfire-exposure-and-fuel-management-on-western-US-national-forests.pdf Basic principles of forest fuel reduction treatments http://www.sierraforestlegacy.org/Resources/Conservation/FireForestEcology/FireScienceResearch/FuelsManagement/FM-Agee05.pdf Big Bear Fire Department http://www.bigbearfire.com/ San Bernardino County Fire Hazard Abatement http://cms.sbcounty.gov/lus/FireHazardAbatement/FireHazardAbatementHome.aspx
5. Monitor the effectiveness of forest and fuel management strategies, and revise as needed.	Team with Agencies	Month 12, on-going	