

**ROSS VALLEY FIRE DEPARTMENT
STAFF REPORT**

For the meeting of September 8, 2021

To: Board of Directors

From: Kathleen Cutter, Defensible Space Lead

Subject: Receive Presentation on Defensible Space Program

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Board receives the Presentation on the Defensible Space Program that will provide an update on the program and the number of inspections throughout the greater Ross Valley area for the JPA member agencies.

BACKGROUND:

The agencies of Central Marin Fire Department, Kentfield Fire Protection District, Ross Valley Fire Department, and Marin County Fire Department are working together to provide defensible space inspections for the Greater Ross Valley area and West Marin. We have 22 seasonal defensible inspectors this year, with the goal to complete 10,000 inspections this season. A secondary goal is to inspect every property under our responsibility once every three years.

Furthermore, with every inspection, property owners are provided with a comprehensive report; such report can be accessed online using a unique code given to the property owners or left at their door by the inspectors. Additionally, residents are welcome to accompany the inspectors during the inspection; our inspectors do not access properties without the permission of the tenant or owner. If no one is home or access is denied, the inspection is done from the street, obeying laws of curtilage.

We are piloting custom Defensible Space Software, which allows inspectors to collect data. It compiles an individualized report for each property. Soon, it will provide us with comprehensive data about the areas we have inspected. We will share this information as it becomes available.

DISCUSSION:

As of September 1, our defensible space inspectors have completed over 10,500 inspections eclipsing our season goal. While our program doesn't have a hard end-of-season date, we expect to have the funds to inspect through October.

Approximately four days to one week before our inspectors start inspecting a neighborhood, we notify the community through “press releases” pushed through the RVFD, the local Firewise sites, and through town newsletters/notifications. In addition, while inspecting, our inspectors place sandwich boards with the message “Wildfire Mitigation Defensible Space Inspectors in Your Neighborhood” at highly visible--and safe--locations in the inspected area.

The inspection areas are based on the Mutual Threat Zones (MTZ), otherwise known as the Evacuation Maps, and this interactive map can be found at Marin MTZ (Lynx 2021). In 2020, the following Ross Valley’s MTZ areas were inspected: Bothin, Fairfax-Bolinas, Fawn, Irving, Kent, Legend, Redwood, Ridgeway, San Francisco, Shady, and Van Winkle. As such, they are not being considered for inspection in 2021.

Moreover, as of September 1, we have completed inspecting the MTZ maps of Oak Manor, Drake, Cascade Canyon, Oak, Alameda, and in Ross east of Sir Francis Drake. We expect to finish up the MTZ of Tamalpais on Tuesday September 7th.

September and October will find us first in Sequoia, and we will work through Forest, Herrera, Deer Park, and Wellington. With the completion of these areas, all of the Greater Ross area will have been inspected at least once since 2019, thus meeting our goal of inspecting every property in a three-year period.

We are currently developing our reinspection strategy and have begun reinspecting selected properties in the Corte Madera and Kentfield jurisdictions.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funding for the defensible space program is provided by the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority (MWPA); therefore, there is no other fiscal impact to the department.