



Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative awarded \$7,500,000 CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant

The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council will serve as the CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant recipient and grant administrator for the collaborative's implementation of forest health and wildfire mitigation treatments covering 955 acres in the Los Gatos Creek Watershed.

June 24, 2021, Saratoga, CA—Today, the Santa Clara County FireSafe Council (SCFSC) announced that the Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative has been awarded a \$7,500,000 CAL FIRE Forest Health Grant. This landscape scale forest health project focuses on creating ecosystem resilience, mitigating the risk of catastrophic wildfire while enhancing the safety of communities in the southern Silicon Valley, protecting sensitive native and endemic species and habitats, and protecting the drinking water in Lexington and Elsmar reservoirs which supply over 100,000 residents.

The collaborative, formed in 2020, includes San Jose Water, Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Santa Clara County Parks, and the Santa Clara FireSafe Council. This collaboration, a unique, multi-stakeholder approach, facilitates each stakeholders' efforts on landscape level treatments — altering the course of drastic changes that important ecosystems are experiencing. The collaborative has identified an interconnectable mosaic pattern of treatment areas that, with ecologically sensitive treatments, meet the goals of the Forest Health Program to:

- Establish healthy, resilient fire-adapted ecosystems to protect and conserve natural resources.
- Protect upper watersheds where important regional water supplies originate.
- Promote the long-term storage of carbon and reduce the severity of catastrophic wildfire thereby increasing community and forest ecosystem protection.

The Los Gatos Creek Watershed partners each express their gratitude to CAL FIRE and look forward to commencing environmental surveys and field-based activities. The project is expected to be completed by March 31, 2025. Accordingly, the principals from the collaborative partners add the following statements:

"I am very excited to continue our strong partnerships with our allied agencies with the inception of the first Forest Health Grant in the CAL FIRE Santa Clara Unit," Jake Hess, Unit Chief.

"This is truly a unique partnership with marquee organizations, each with a deep commitment to the Los Gatos Creek Watershed and experience serving the local community," stated Seth Schalet, Chief Executive Officer of the Santa Clara FireSafe Council. "Over many months, the collaborative partners continuously refined our application, ensuring optimum support of the goals CAL FIRE outlined in the Forest Health Grant application," continued Schalet.

According to Dede Smullen, President Santa Clara County Firesafe Council, "The Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative recognized the urgent need to bring together public and private landowners and organizations to address the impacts of climate change on our forests and our community. This Forest Health Project is the first but hopefully not the last of its kind and scale in Santa Clara County. The Santa Clara County FireSafe Council looks forward to working with our partners on this project and invites all Santa Clara County residents and landowners large and small to join us in our efforts to protect our homes, community, and environment from wildfire."

"Protecting the Los Gatos Creek Watershed and surrounding forestlands is a high priority for San Jose Water, and working with our neighbors and regional partners was a way to provide broader benefit while leveraging their expansive expertise," said Andy Gere, President and Chief Operating Officer for San Jose Water. "The watershed provides an important water source for 100,000 consumers, and reducing the hazard from wildfire while improving forest health serves the entire region."

"Partnerships and grant funding, like the Forest Health Grant project, are critical to significantly reducing wildland fire risk in our region," Midpen General Ana Maria Ruiz said. "Collaborations like these are supporting Midpen in proactively increasing our ecologically sensitive vegetation management on the public land we manage by nearly 600% over the next ten years."

"The County's Parks and Recreation Department is proud to work in collaboration with our regional partners in this effort to reduce fire risk," said Don Rocha, Director of the County of Santa Clara Parks and Recreation Department. "As we have seen increases in wildfires in recent years, forest management is an increasingly important tool for us to meet our mission goals of preserving and maintaining our natural habitats and serving our community."

The Los Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative Forest Health Grant is a collaboration between these public and private entities and is a part of California Climate Investments, a statewide initiative that puts billions of Cap-and-Trade dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health and the environment. particularly in disadvantaged communities. The Cap-and-Trade program also creates a financial incentive for industries to invest in clean technologies and develop innovative ways to reduce pollution.

California Climate Investments projects include affordable housing, renewable energy, public transportation, zero-emission vehicles, environmental restoration, more sustainable agriculture, recycling, and much more. At least 35 percent of these investments are located within and benefiting residents of disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and low-income households across California. For more information, visit the California Climate Investments website at: www.caclimateinvestments.ca.gov.

The public can monitor project communications and updates by visiting the Lost Gatos Creek Watershed Collaborative website at: <http://www.lgwatershedhealth.com/>