



Council Agenda Report

To: Mayor Silverstein and the Honorable Members of the City Council

Prepared by: Joyce Parker-Bozylinski, Contract Planner

Reviewed by: Richard Mollica, Planning Director

Approved by: Steve McClary, City Manager

Date prepared: February 7, 2023 Meeting date: February 27, 2023

Subject: Southern California Edison Vegetation Management Program

RECOMMENDED ACTION: 1) Receive an update on the Southern California Edison (SCE) Vegetation Management Program; and 2) Direct the Planning Director to send a letter to SCE Vegetation Management revising the terms to remove the requirement to report heavy trimming (branches greater than 7 inches) or removal of non-native trees unless the work constitutes major vegetation removal as determined by the City's contract biologist.

FISCAL IMPACT: Funding for this project is included in the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 in Account No. 101-2001-5100-00 (Professional Services).

WORK PLAN: This item was included in the Adopted Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2022-2023 as Item 1n (Oversight of SCE Annual Vegetation Maintenance Program).

DISCUSSION: After the November 2018 Woolsey Fire, staff worked with SCE to reach an agreement on how SCE's Annual Vegetation Management Program would be conducted to ensure that any tree trimming or removals complied with the City's Local Coastal Program. The SCE Vegetation Management Program is an ongoing annual program and includes hazard tree assessments, tree pruning and removal, brush removal, and weed abatement. California regulations require utilities to trim trees or vegetation that could start a fire or be a danger to the public. Hazardous trees that are dead, dying, or diseased due to drought or bark beetle infestation are also removed as part of the program.

After the Woolsey Fire, there was an active dead or damaged tree removal and trimming program around the utility lines in Malibu. This program included trimming trees to the California Public Utilities Commission's tree pruning standards which recommend a minimal clearance at the time of trimming in high fire areas of 12 feet. Due to time constraints, City staff prepared a letter dated May 3, 2019 (Attachment 1) that outlined the City's expectations regarding the SCE Annual Vegetation Management Program as implemented post-Woolsey Fire. This letter has served as a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and SCE. On May 13, 2019, an SCE spokesperson made a presentation to the City Council and stated that SCE agreed to comply with the requirements outlined in the letter.

The letter required SCE to notify the City of any heavy work/heaving trimming, which was defined as trimming into limbs/branches/trunks greater than 7 inches in diameter, on both protected and non-protected trees. Chapter 5 (Native Tree Protection Ordinance) of the LCP identifies protected trees as Native Oaks (*Quercus* species), California Walnut (*Juglans californica*), Western Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), or Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*) tree, that have at least one trunk measuring six inches or more in diameter, or a combination of any two trunks measuring a total of eight inches or more in diameter, measured at four and one-half feet above natural grade.

The City was divided into grids and SCE identified which trees were scheduled for trimming or removal in each grid and that information was then posted on the City's website for residents and other interested parties. The City hired a consulting arborist to conduct site inspections of each tree proposed for trimming or removal and provide recommendations either concurring with the SCE tree assessment or making alternative recommendations. For instance, in some situations, the City's contract arborist may recommend leaving the tree stump to allow for new growth to occur instead of removing a tree completely or recommend denial of one or more of the branches identified by SCE for removal. This program is still ongoing and includes a request from SCE for trimming or removal, a site inspection by the City's contract arborist, a report to staff from the City's contract arborist, an authorization to proceed with the trimming or removal as recommended by the City's contract arborist, and then a final inspection by the City's contract arborist to ensure the trees were trimmed or removed per the City's contract arborist recommendations. The SCE Vegetation Management Program is a two-part process that includes an initial site inspection to identify trees that should be trimmed or removed and then, once the City approves the work recommended by the SCE inspectors, tree trimming companies contracted by SCE complete the work.

Since it has been over three years since the Woolsey fire, and nearly all of the tree removals and trimming related to the fire have been completed, staff wishes to update the City's May 3, 2019 letter regarding expectations for SCE's work on trees in City as follows:

Action Plan Item #2 - Prior to conducting any trimming work, SCE will provide the City with a list of all trees (protected or not protected) that are proposed for heavy work or removal, including the diameter of the limbs/trunks over 7 inches. SCE shall provide the City with a list of all work proposed on protected trees or in ESHA prior to commencement of work. SCE shall not trim beyond the previous cuts without prior approval of the City.

Staff is proposing to revise Item # 2 under the Action Plan to remove the requirement for SCE to provide a list of non-protected trees proposed for heavy trimming. Currently, SCE requests for trimming both protected and non-protected trees mainly consist of having seasonal growth trimmed back to the previous year's cut. Requiring the reporting and inspection by the City Arborist of non-protected trees is no longer recommended.

Action Plan Item #7 – SCE has already conducted the pre-inspections in the western portions of Malibu based on its 12-month trim cycle. To address the City's concern about the unburned fuel loads in the east port of Malibu, SCE will immediately begin pre inspections in the east portion of Malibu (east of Malibu Canyon Road) to ensure there are no threats requiring immediate remediation while work proceeds in the west where pre-inspections have occurred.

Staff is proposing to remove Item 7 in the letter since it is no longer relevant.

Shothole Borer Beetle

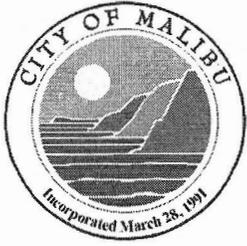
Staff was contacted by a Malibu resident concerned about several aspects of SCE's tree trimming and removal program including the amount (12 feet around each tree) of trimming and the proper disposal of trees that have died due to the shothole borer beetle. These beetles can cause dieback and eventual death of both protected and non-protected trees. In order to prevent the spread of the beetle, the trees must be chipped to a certain size and disposed of properly. The Office of the Los Angeles County Agriculture Commissioner has an active program (Attachment 3) to identify infested trees and utilize contractors to have heavily infested trees, known as amplifier trees, cut down, chipped, and taken away for proper disposal. The County offers free training on identifying and properly disposing of infested trees. SCE inspectors and tree trimmers working in the unincorporated area north of Malibu recently attended a training program to identify and remove or trim trees infested with the beetle. SCE has indicated they use the same inspectors in Malibu as in the unincorporated area so these inspectors have already been trained but SCE has agreed to have the tree trimming companies that contract with SCE in Malibu undergo the same training. Staff is proposing to memorialize this training requirement in the revised SCE letter to ensure both SCE inspectors and tree trimmers are properly trained to identify the shot hole borer and the proper way to dispose of an infected tree.

Staff will continue to work with the City's contract arborist to monitor and coordinate with SCE and its contractors on the implementation of SCE's annual vegetation management program. The staff's focus is ensuring native trees and Environmental Sensitive Habitat Area (ESHA) are protected concurrently with these fire hazard reduction programs.

ALTERNATIVES: The Council could direct staff to make additional changes to the letter.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. May 3, 2019, SCE Agreement Letter
2. Draft Revised SCE Agreement Letter
3. Los Angeles County Department of Agricultural Commissioner PowerPoint



City of Malibu

23825 Stuart Ranch Road · Malibu, California · 90265-4861
Phone (310) 456-2489 · Fax (310) 456-3356 · www.malibucity.org

May 3, 2019

David Guzman
SCE Manager
Vegetation Management
1440 S. California Avenue
Monrovia CA 91016
Via email: David.Guzman@sce.com

Re: SCE Vegetation Program in Malibu

Dear Mr. Guzman:

The City appreciates SCE taking action to comply with the Malibu's Local Coastal Program (LCP) as it conducts its annual vegetation maintenance program this year. As we've discussed, while the City prioritizes fire safety, there is concern in the community about the potential effect of the program on habitat and wildlife if it is not conducted sensitively following the Woolsey Fire. We also want to keep residents as informed as possible.

In the past, SCE has completed this work in a few months, before the end of summer.

Summarized below are the City's expectations for the program this year – these may be further refined as we continue to work through the program and the City brings its arborist on board:

Parameters

1. City protected trees include the following with at least one trunk measuring six inches or more in diameter, or a combination of any two trunks measuring a total of eight inches or more in diameter, measured at four and one-half feet above natural grade:¹
 - a. Native oak (*Quercus* species),
 - b. California Walnut (*Juglans californica*),
 - c. Western Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*),
 - d. Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*), and
 - e. Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*).
2. "Heavy work/heavy trimming" is trimming into limbs/branches/trunks greater than 7 inches diameter.
3. Work on protected trees that requires a coastal development permit (CDP) includes:

¹ LCP Local Implementation Plan (LIP) Chapter 5

- a. Removal of or heavy work on a protected tree, unless the tree meets an exemption listed in b. below. With prior City approval, the tree can be trimmed back to the old cuts (remove seasonal growth) previously established while the CDP is pending.
 - b. An exemption to the CDP requirement may be granted by the City for the following:²
 - i. Protected trees destroyed or damaged by a natural disaster. A damaged tree shall be exempt only if the general health of the tree is so poor that efforts to ensure its long-term health and survival are unlikely to be successful as determined by an arborist report and confirmed by the City Biologist after a site inspection of the tree.
 - ii. Native trees that constitute an imminent public health and safety hazard due to the risk of falling where the structural instability cannot be remedied as determined by a licensed arborist's report and confirmed by the City Biologist after a site inspection of the tree.
 - iii. Native trees that were planted for ornamental purposes as part of an approved coastal development permit where their planting was not required by the LCP or Coastal Act for mitigation or restoration.
4. Work on trees/other vegetation in ESHA generally requires a CDP. The City shall be consulted prior to work in these areas.
 5. Work on non-protected trees that the City determines constitutes "major vegetation removal" will require a CDP. For example, removal of a whole grove of unprotected trees in a concentrated area would likely constitute major vegetation removal. Trimming to old cuts on non-protected trees or removal of an individual non-protected tree would generally not trigger a CDP.

Action Plan

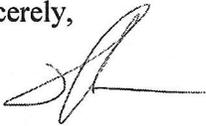
1. SCE's contractor, Utility Tree Service, will provide a weekly log out that includes the number of crews working within specific street boundaries and the timeframes for the work. The grid map will show streets and grid boundaries so it's easy for residents to understand the street boundaries within which the work will be occurring.
2. Prior to conducting any trimming work, SCE will provide the City with a list of all trees (protected or not protected) that are proposed for heavy work or removal, including the diameter of the limbs/trunks over 7 inches. SCE shall provide the City with a list of all work proposed on protected trees or in ESHA prior to commencement of work. SCE shall not trim beyond the previous cuts without prior approval of the City.
3. Where closely spaced groups of non-protected trees are proposed for heavy work or removal, SCE will consult with the City to conduct a site visit to facilitate the City's evaluation of whether the work constitutes "major vegetation removal" requiring a CDP.
4. SCE shall consult with the City prior to any work on protected trees or in ESHA to ensure no CDP is required.
5. SCE will protect nesting birds in accordance with all state and federal standards.

² LIP Section 5.8 (certified/effective March 9, 2019, not yet codified online)

6. The City shall combine as feasible the activities requiring a CDP into a single application, potentially on a grid by grid basis. The City shall process complete CDP applications as expeditiously as possible.
7. SCE has already conducted preinspections in the western portions of Malibu based on its 12 month trim cycle. To address the City's concern about the unburned fuel loads in the east portion of Malibu, SCE will immediately begin preinspections in the east portion of Malibu (east of Malibu Canyon Road) to ensure there are no threats requiring immediate remediation while work proceeds in the west where preinspections have occurred.
8. SCE will employ accepted ANSI A300 (tree pruning) standards.
9. SCE will provide property owner notification in advance of work on property owners' trees including specific notification of any removals or substantial (i.e., heavy trims) in order to provide the property owner an opportunity to contest SCE's decision about the proposed cuts and otherwise ask questions about the process.

Should you have questions, please contact me. We look forward to mapping out an LCP compliance program for next year as well.

Sincerely,



for BB

Bonnie Blue
Planning Director

cc: Reva Feldman, City Manager
Christi Hogin, City Attorney
Jessica Colvard, City of Malibu Associate Planner
Rudolph Gonzales, SCE Governmental Relations



City of Malibu

23825 Stuart Ranch Road · Malibu, California · 90265-4861
Phone (310) 456-2489 · Fax (310) 456-3356 · www.malibucity.org

February 17, 2023

Matthew Saddler
SCE Operations Manager
Vegetation Management
1440 S. California Avenue
Monrovia, CA 91016
Via. Email: Matthew.Saddler@sce.com

Re: SCE Vegetation Program in Malibu

Dear Mr. Saddler:

This letter is a follow-up to the City's May 3, 2019 letter (attached), which provided Parameters (definitions) and an Action Plan for the SCE Vegetation Program in Malibu following the Woolsey Fire. The City appreciates SCE working with the City Arborist to comply with the letter to date. Since it has been over three years since the fire, and nearly all of the tree removals and trimming related to the fire have been completed, we are updating the City's expectations for SCE's work on protected trees in City limits going forward. Please see the following updated Action Plan items 1 and 2:

Action Plan updates

1. On a grid-by-grid basis, SCE or their contractors shall provide the City Arborist with a list of all protected trees within City limits that are scheduled for trimming. The list shall indicate which (if any) protected trees will require whole tree removal or "heavy work" (pruning of branches 7 inches diameter or larger). SCE is no longer required to submit a list of non-protected trees regardless of the scope of work.
2. The City Arborist shall be notified of all protected trees identified for removal or heavy work by SCE's Drought Resolution Initiative (DRI), Hazard Tree Management Program (HTMP), and all other initiatives/programs that may be developed by SCE in the future. Malibu's protected tree species are as follows:
 - Native Oaks (*Quercus* species)
 - California Walnut (*Juglans californica*)
 - Western Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*)
 - Alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*)
 - Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)

Action Plan items 3 through 9 in the May 3, 2019 letter will remain the same, except for item 7 which is no longer relevant and can be disregarded going forward.

In addition to the changes noted above, a new item will be added to the Action Plan.

3. All tree inspectors and tree trimming companies working for SCE in Malibu must attend a training program offered by the Office of the Los Angeles County Agriculture Commissioner to identify and properly dispose of trees (protected and non-protected) infested with the shot hole borer.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Richard Mollica
Planning Director

Attachment: May 3, 2019 Letter to SCE

cc: Mayor and Honorable Members of the City Council
Steve McClary, City Manager
Alison Lancaster, Contract Arborist
Andrew Thomas, SCE Government Relations



ISHB – What are they?

- ISHB are ambrosia beetles
- They are fungal farmers
- The females have a specialized structure called mycangia that carries the fungi
- The adults and larvae solely feed on fungi
- Most ambrosia beetles attack stressed or dying trees



ISHB Biology

- Native to Southeast Asia, accidentally shipped with wood packing materials around 2003
- Now found throughout Southern California, Israel, South Africa, and throughout the world's Mediterranean ecosystems
- A pregnant beetle leaves a mulch pile, firewood, or a tree and...
- Bores into a tree, inoculates the tree with fusarium fungus, and lays eggs



ISHB Biology

- Offspring mate with each other and continue to create tens of thousands of beetles
- The beetles eat the fungus and continue to create galleries in the tree
- As a tree starts to die, the beetles leave and the cycle continues



Photo by J.Kabashima

Effects on trees

- Galleries physically weaken the structural integrity of the tree and can create hazardous trees
- The real, and often fatal, damage comes from the tree's response to the fusarium fungus
- In defense, the tree shuts off that portion of the xylem.
- If too much fungus, the tree basically shuts off its nutrient supply system and branch dieback or tree death occurs
- ISHB prefers healthy and irrigated trees
- ISHB will infect a wide variety of native and non-native tree species

Beetle entry hole and dark fusarium fungus with medium ball point pen for scale (Photo by R. Burnap, ACWM)



Effects on trees



Native and non-native tree species impacted

Reproductive hosts (tree that supports beetle reproduction and can grow the fusarium fungus)

ISHB has been found in these species but are less likely to have branch dieback

Susceptible to ISHB-FD (may cause tree death)

1. *Acer buergerianum* - Trident maple
2. *Acer macrophyllum* - Big leaf maple*
3. *Acer negundo* - Box elder*
4. *Parkinsonia aculeata* - Palo verde
5. *Platanus racemosa* - California sycamore*
6. *Platanus x hispanica* - London plane
7. *Populus fremontii* - Fremont cottonwood*
8. *Populus nigra* - Black poplar*
9. *Populus trichocarpa* - Black cottonwood*
10. *Quercus lobata* - Valley oak*
11. *Quercus robur* - English oak
12. *Ricinus communis* - Castorbean
13. *Salix gooddingii* - Black willow*
14. *Salix laevigata* - Red willow*
15. *Salix lasiolepis* - Arroyo willow*

1. *Acacia melanoxylon* - Australian blackwood
2. *Acacia spp.* - Acacia
3. *Acer paxii* - Evergreen maple
4. *Acer saccharinum* - Silver leaf maple
5. *Aesculus californica* - California buckeye*
6. *Ailanthus altissima* - Tree of heaven
7. *Albizia julibrissin* - Mimosa
8. *Alectryon excelsus* - Titoki
9. *Alnus rhombifolia* - White alder*
10. *Archontophoenix cunninghamiana* - King palm
11. *Baccharis salicifolia* - Mule fat*
12. *Bauhinia variegata* - Purple orchid tree
13. *Brachychiton populneus* - Kurrajong
14. *Camellia semiserrata* - Camellia
15. *Castanospermum australe* - Moreton Bay chestnut
16. *Casuarina equisetifolia* - Australian pine tree
17. *Parkinsonia florida* - Blue palo verde*
18. *Parkinsonia x sonorae* - Sonoran palo verde
19. *Cocculus laurifolius* - Laurel leaf snailseed tree
20. *Cupaniopsis anacardioides* - Carrotwood
21. *Dombeya cacuminum* - Strawberry tree
22. *Erythrina caffra* - Coast coral tree
23. *Erythrina coralloides* - Coral tree
24. *Erythrina falcata* - Brazilian coral tree
25. *Corymbia ficifolia* - Red flowering gum
26. *Fagus crenata* - Japanese beech
27. *Ficus altissima* - Council tree
28. *Ficus carica* - Black mission fig
29. *Gleditsia triacanthos* - Honey locust
30. *Harpullia pendula* - Tulip wood
31. *Howea forsteriana* - Kentia palm
32. *Ilex cornuta* - Chinese holly
33. *Jacaranda mimosifolia* - Jacaranda
34. *Acer palmatum* - Japanese maple
35. *Koelreuteria bipinnata* - Chinese flame tree
36. *Liquidambar styraciflua* - American sweet gum
37. *Magnolia grandiflora* - Southern magnolia
38. *Magnolia virginiana* - Sweet bay
39. *Persea americana* - Avocado
40. *Platanus mexicana* - Mexican sycamore
41. *Prosopis articulata* - Mesquite*
42. *Pterocarya stenoptera* - Chinese wingnut
43. *Quercus agrifolia* - Coast live oak*
44. *Quercus chrysolepis* - Canyon live oak*
45. *Quercus engelmannii* - Englemann oak*
46. *Quercus suber* - Cork oak
47. *Salix babylonica* - Weeping willow
48. *Spathodea campanulata* - African tulip tree
49. *Tamarix ramosissima* - Tamarisk
50. *Wisteria floribunda* - Japanese wisteria
51. *Xylosma congesta* - Dense logwood / Shiny *Xylosma*

Field ID

Look for brown staining, gumming, frass (sawdust), and the entry hole



Staining



Gumming



White Powdery Exudate



Frass

Project Goal

There will be 2 projects running concurrently:

1. Trapping (UC – IPM grant \$160K)
2. Amplifier Tree Removal/Pruning (CalFIRE grant \$600)
3. Share Data

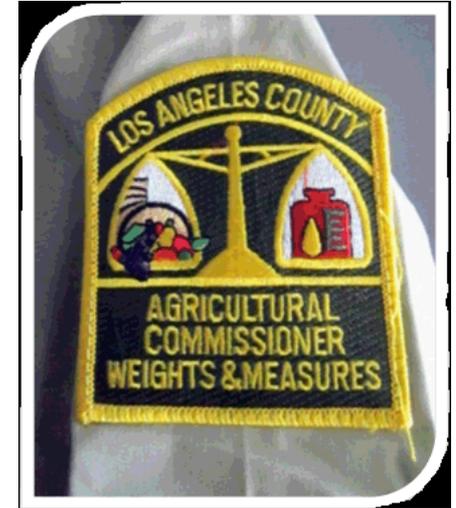
Goals: Determine location of ISHB infested trees, remove amplifier trees, and prune trees that can survive infestation

End Date: April 2022

ISHB Trapping

Detection will be accomplished through trapping and visual surveys

- ~ 3,000 traps deployed in LAC
- From March to September
- Trap duration 1 month
- Staff will install them and then check them a month later
- All staff will in uniform and in white trucks



Trap Types



County will use option B – a sticky trap with a lure

Amplifier Tree Removals/Pruning

1. Utilizing contractors, amplifier trees will be cut down, chipped, and taken away for proper disposal
2. We will not remove trees with nests
3. Permits will be attained when required
4. Our staff will monitor removals and pruning



Entomology laboratory

Our entomologist will assist with sample Identification, and can help residents with their garden pest questions as well.



Plant Pathology laboratory

Our plant pathologist has been assisting field staff with ideas on how to sample, sample preparation for submission, and tracking data.

Our lab currently has the ability to check soil for nematodes and SOD



Plant root stock being inspected for diseases

Contact info

- Max Regis
- 562-622-0427 office
- 562-857-4760 cell
- mregis@acwm.lacounty.gov

- Rachel Burnap
- rburnap@acwm.lacounty.gov