

**MONTEREY PENINSULA REGIONAL PARK DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING**

DATE: October 4, 2023
TO: Board of Directors
FROM: Jake Smith, Planning & Conservation Program Manager
REVIEWED BY: Rafael Payan, General Manager
SUBJECT: Review and Approval of Resolution #2023-10, Finding Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Management Project as Consistent with CalVTP PEIR and Adopting Project-Specific MMRP, Findings, and Statement of Overriding Considerations

SUMMARY:

Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District (MPRPD) is proposing the Garland Ranch Regional Park (Park) Fuel Management Project (Project), located in Carmel Valley, California on County of Monterey (County) Assessor's Parcel Nos. 416-511-005-000 and 416-027-025-000. The Project consists of the removal and/or thinning of three invasive blue gum Eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*) stands to promote the protection and regeneration of native habitats within the Park and to reduce wildfire risk in the area. The Project is being proposed under the statewide California Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Report (CalVTP PEIR). Staff are requesting that the Board approve the Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Management Project as consistent with the CalVTP PEIR and adopt the project-specific Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program, Findings, and Statement of Overriding Considerations.

FISCAL IMPACT:

\$3889.25 Filing fee for a Notice of Determination

FUNDING SOURCE:

6730- Garland Ranch Maintenance/ Services

FUNDING BALANCE:

\$510,000 as of writing this report.

BACKGROUND:

MPRPD has been working over the past few years to manage stands of Eucalyptus trees at Garland Ranch Regional Park to mitigate severe wildfire risk and protect native habitat. In summer 2021, MPRPD partnered with Cal FIRE's Gabilan Conservation Camp Inmate Hand Crew to oversee a small-scale eucalyptus removal project at the Park. Recognizing the need for more resources and following board approval in 2022, MPRPD secured grant funding from the State Coastal Conservancy's Wildfire Resilience Grant Program to remove and thin the majority of eucalyptus at the Park. This was augmented further by a 2022 CAL FIRE grant to the Resource Conservation District of Monterey County (RCDMC) for its Carmel Valley Fuel Break Project, which included additional funding for activities that support eucalyptus removal at the Park.

In fall of 2022, staff worked with foresters and wildland resource managers to evaluate the eucalyptus grove and develop a memorandum (Memo) that outlined treatment recommendations for eucalyptus (**ATTACHMENT 1**). The Memo documented that eucalyptus stands at the Park create an unnaturally high fire hazard, are detrimental to native vegetation, and should be removed in areas where it has expanded into native habitat or presents especially high fire risk (**Figures 1-4**). The Memo also confirmed that the main stand of eucalyptus is unhealthy due to overcrowding and should be heavily thinned to improve the health of the stand, while also making it easier to prevent high fire fuel conditions from returning. In spring 2023, RCDMC agreed to serve as a technical advisor on planning and implementation of the eucalyptus removal and used its grant funding from Cal FIRE to secure Denise Duffy & Associates (DD&A) to assist with developing a detailed project description and CEQA compliance via the CalVTP.



Figure 1. The canopies of Eucalyptus trees showing indicators of poor health and susceptibility to wildfire, including epicormic sprouting, evidence of past windthrow, and overcrowding which can increase the rate of fire spread.



Figure 2. View of bark debris and leaf litter on the forest floor and suspended in the tree branches providing ladder fuels that increase risk of crown fires.



Figure 3. Young Eucalyptus trees encroach within the Carmel River Riparian Corridor.



Figure 4. Heavily shaded understory conditions and bark debris smothering native understory growth and regeneration.

DISCUSSION:

The Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Management Project (Project) proposes to treat 12.2 acres of Eucalyptus (17.5 acres within the Park) by thinning and maintaining a 4-acre main stand of eucalyptus and removing eucalyptus within an 8.2-acre area where it is impacting native vegetation or presents a high potential fire hazard. **Figure 5** shows the Project treatment areas in the Park. Treatment activities will include felling of eucalyptus trees, removal of limbs up to 15 feet high, gridding eucalyptus stumps, mastication of eucalyptus bark and woody debris in the understory, and retaining native oak, riparian trees, and native shrubs. Biomass from the removal would be burned on site, preferably via an enclosed air curtain burner or carbonator, or off hauled to an appropriate disposal facility. Targeted herbicide application will be used to control re-growth from cut stumps and will be applied by certified and licensed pesticide applicators in accordance with all local, state, and federal regulations. The Project is expected to require three to four months to be completed, barring any weather related or other unforeseen delays. Maintenance of the Project area would occur every 1 to 3 years, depending on the amount of eucalyptus sprouting and regrowth, and includes additional mechanical removal, hand removal, herbicide application, and prescribed herbivory (e.g. goat grazing).

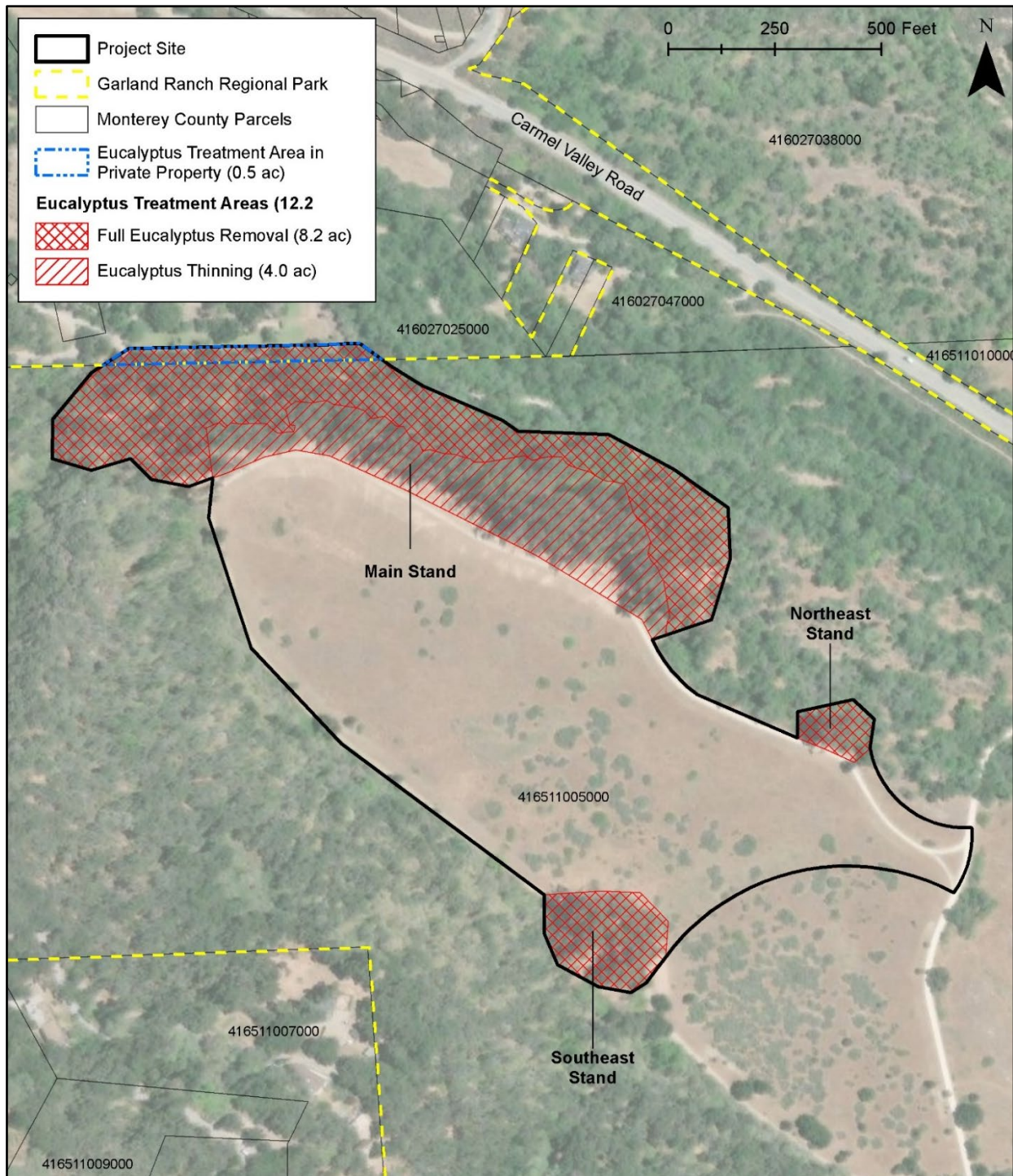


Figure 5. Project Treatment Area Map

The Project team has conducted a project-specific analysis (PSA), as directed in the CalVTP PEIR, to ensure that the Project would not result in new impacts that were not covered in the PEIR (**Exhibit B in ATTACHMENT 2**). The Project will incorporate all applicable specific project requirements, mitigation measures, and other requirements

identified in the CalVTP PEIR. Measures that will be implemented as part of the proposed project are provided in Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan for the Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Management Project. (**Exhibit D in ATTACHMENT 2**)

The Monterey Peninsula Regional Park District as lead agency now needs to review these findings, approve the Project, adopt the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program and file the Notice of Determination in order to complete the CEQA process, while staff continue to work to secure permits that are necessary for this work to proceed.

ACTION:

Staff respectfully recommends that the Board approve the Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Management Project as consistent with the California Vegetation Treatment Program Programmatic Environmental Impact Report and adopt the project-specific mitigation monitoring and reporting Program, findings, and statement of overriding considerations (**ATTACHMENT 2**).

ATTACHMENTS:

1. [Memorandum: Recommendations for Eucalyptus Management](#)
2. [Resolution Finding the Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Management Project as consistent with CalVTP PEIR and adopting project-Specific MMRP, findings, and statement of overriding considerations](#)
 - Exhibit A: California Vegetation Treatment Program Environmental Impact Report available at the following hyperlink and not included as a standalone exhibit: (<https://bof.fire.ca.gov/projects-and-programs/calvtp/calvtp-programmatic-eir/>)
 - [Exhibit B: Project-Specific Analysis for the Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Management Project](#)
 - [Exhibit C: Findings and Statement of Overriding Considerations for CEQA Project-Specific Analysis Regarding the Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Management Project](#)
 - [Exhibit D: Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Plan for the Garland Ranch Regional Park Fuel Management Project](#)