Weed Abatement Program

Community Services Cluster Presentation
April 13, 2022

Weed Abatement Program
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Removal of hazardous vegetation (weeds & brush) and rubbish:

- Joint enforcement and clearance effort between
  - County Fire (District) and - Ag. Comm./Wts. & Meas. (ACWM)

- **ACWM**: Focus on *unimproved* properties (vacant lots)
- **DISTRICT**: Focus on *improved* properties (parcels w/structures)

- Administered in areas served by Consolidated Fire Protection Dist. of L.A. Co.
  (All Unincorporated areas & Cities contracting Fire via District)

- ACWM also serves some Cities outside District via mutual agreements:
  (Glendale, La Verne, So. Pasadena, Arcadia, Santa Fe Springs, Monterey Park)

- Legal Authority: CA Health & Safety Code *(HSC §§ 13879 & 14875-14922)*
- Buffer Zones - Los Angeles Fire Code Title 32
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

California Health and Safety Code (HSC §§ 13879 and 14875-14922)

• Our legal authority to conduct Weed Abatement activities

• Enables County Boards of Supervisors to declare weeds, brush & rubbish on private property to be public nuisances which must be abated
Weed Abatement Program

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

What is a Public Nuisance?

• Vegetation & Rubbish that pose a fire hazard to people, homes & roads
• Grows or Occurs upon declared property
ABOUT THE PROGRAM

BUFFER ZONES

Los Angeles Fire Code Title 32

- Firebreak up to 100 ft from a structure
- Firebreak up to 200 ft from structure in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone

CAL FIRE designation based on a combination of:

- How a fire will behave

  and

- Probability of flames and embers threatening buildings
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Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (In Red)
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BOS ROLE

Each year in January, the Board of Supervisors passes a resolution declaring weeds/brush/rubbish, etc., on designated parcels as “potential public nuisance.”

Following the resolution, each property owner is sent an Annual Notice:
- Informing of the resolution & associated public (Referee) hearings
- Outlining responsibilities as property owners
- Establishing general deadline by which properties should be cleared
- Explaining how to obtain additional information

To date in 2022, there are 26,979 declared parcels.

- After inspection, any property owner who does not meet the general deadline is issued a Weed/Brush Letter which includes a second clearance deadline.

- If deadline is still not met, the parcel is subject to clearance by County crews with charges assessed to the property tax.  (Typically 3K-4K sites annually)
BOS ROLE (cont’d)

Each year in **March**, a second Board Letter is introduced:

- ACWM prepares & includes a Report of Referee Hearings  (*Joined by Fire*)
- ACWM seeks order to enforce removal of hazardous brush, dry grass, weeds, rubbish, illegal dumping, combustible growth or flammable vegetation (*incl. native & ornamental vegetation*) from unimproved properties in L.A. County

Each year in **July**, a third Board Letter is introduced:

- ACWM provides a list of hazardous vegetation/rubbish abatement work and enforcement charges
- Includes Annual Fee
- Once confirmed, Auditor-Controller enters the amounts of the assessments against respective parcels of land as they appear on the assessment roll.
Weed Abatement Program

TUMBLEWEED REMOVAL ON EASTERN HILL
Weed Abatement Program

TRACTOR MOWING & DISCING (VENDOR)
Weed Abatement Program

ANNUAL FEE

- In 1989, Board of Supervisors authorized ACWM to place an inspection fee on each parcel included in the program, **whether or not** actual clearance work proves necessary by ACWM

- Result: Program is operated at **no cost to** the **general taxpayers**

- Each year, the inspection fee is re-evaluated and receives approval from the L.A. County Auditor-Controller

- The annual fee is adjusted every year, but generally ~ $43 - $48 range

2022 Annual Fee: $45.05.
ANNUAL FEE

WHAT DOES THE ANNUAL FEE COVER?

Recovers costs ACWM incurs for Program-related activities, such as:

- **Inspections** *(At least two physical inspections of properties per year)*
- **Property Ownership** *(determine who owns each of Program’s 26K+ properties)*
- **Notices and Owner Response** *(each year, ACWM mails tens of thousands of letters to property owners & responds to thousands of inquiries from various property owners)*
- **Onsite Meetings** *(ACWM staff meets w/any owner to discuss requirements)*
- **Investigation of Hazard Complaints** *(Respond to 100s of reported hazards)*
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CAN THE ANNUAL FEE BE REMOVED?

Parcel owners can contact ACWM’s office at any time to inquire if their parcel is required to be declared, thus relieving them of the annual fee.

To determine if a parcel may be removed, the following questions are posed:

• Is the parcel vacant?

• Is parcel within 100/200 ft from structures (portions or in its entirety)?

Any “NO” answer is reason for a parcel’s removal from our program.
Weed Abatement Program

PROGRAM IN ACTION

• For decades, the Program has provided **defensible space for firefighters**, demonstrably **saved countless homes** from fires, and most undoubtedly **prevented hundreds of fires from starting** in the first place.

“Before/After” aerial pictures of structure in Woolsey Fire path (Nov. 8-21, 2018)

Note:

← Discing marks around structure....

and

.....Charred earth approaching them →
ACWM: Proud of all we do...

Teaming with prop. owners where we can...
Enforcing where we must.....

Saving lives, properties, homes and communities from wildfires
Addressing Infrastructure Inequity

August 10, 2021 Board Motion: “Addressing Infrastructure Inequity”

- Assess existing infrastructure framework
- Conduct meaningful community engagement
- Define key terms/metrics relative to Equity
- Develop proposed infrastructure framework
Collaborative Partners

County Department Partners
Justice40

Elevated exposure to pollution & associated health problems.

Uneven distribution of climate-related effects on the most vulnerable communities and residents.

Unequal local government resources, community capacity, & opportunities.

Disproportionate access to jobs during the transition to a clean economy.

Uneven distribution of costs & benefits of green investments and environmental programs.

Source: https://www.thejustice40.com/
Process

Phase I: On-Boarding and Assessment (February – April)

Phase II: Listening, Learning, and Making Meaning (May – August)

Phase III: Crafting the Framework (September – December)

Phase IV: Supporting Effective Implementation (January – March)
Stakeholder Engagement

INFORMING THE PROCESS

- Stakeholder Interviews (30)
- Board Advisory Committee Meetings
- Community Engagement
Moving Forward

- Report back to Board with Progress: August 2022
- Report back to Board with proposed Equity-informed Infrastructure Framework: December 2022
- Implement Equity-Informed Infrastructure Framework: March 2023
Questions?